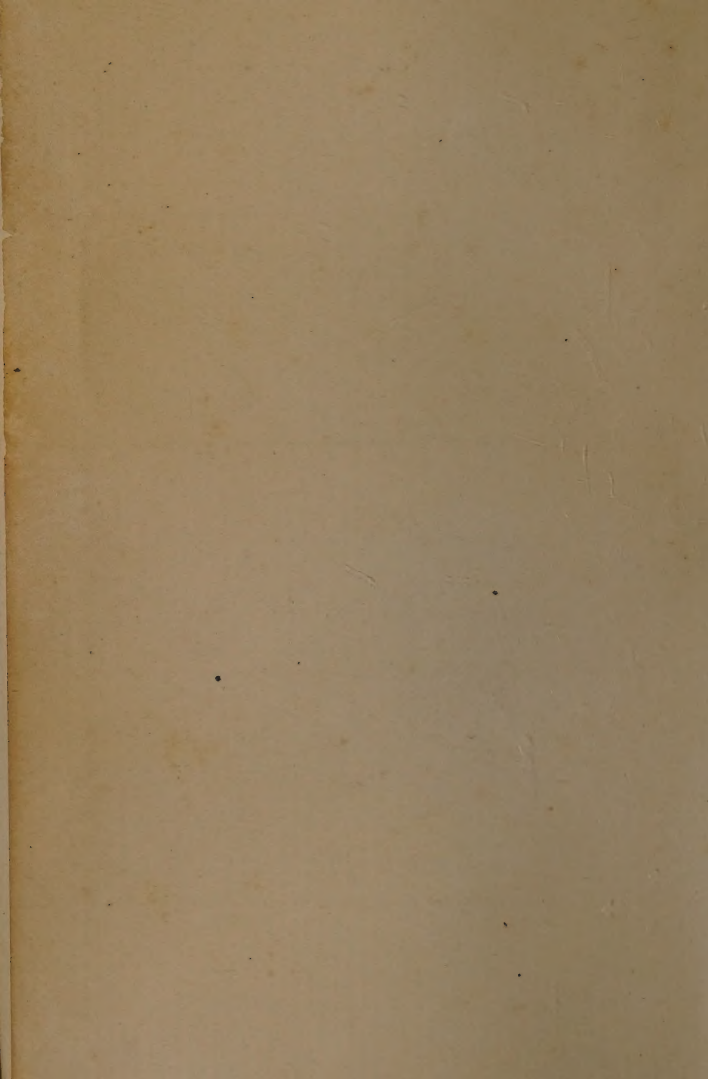


Annals

OF A

Beautiful Life.







Annals of a Beautiful Life.

MEMORIAL

— OF —

ISABEL L. BLAKE.

A HUSBAND'S TRIBUTE

TO THE

MEMORY OF A FAULTLESS WIFE.

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the
death of his saints.—*Ps.* cxvi : 15.

CONCORD, N. H.:

PUBLISHED BY EDWARD A. JENKS.

1879.





ISABEL LAWRENCE,

Wife of Rev. S. Leroy Blake,

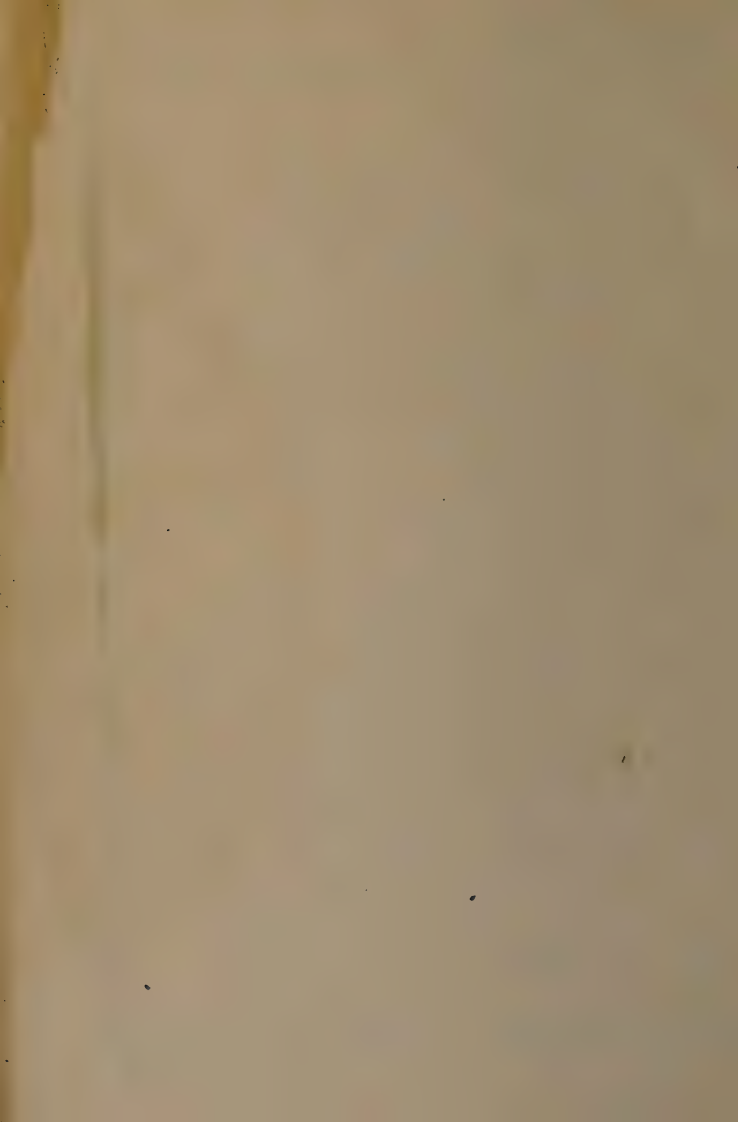
FELL ASLEEP AT CLEVELAND, O., JULY 30, 1879,

AGED 32 YEARS.

REV. 22 : 14.

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right
to the tree of life, and may enter in through the
gates into the city.





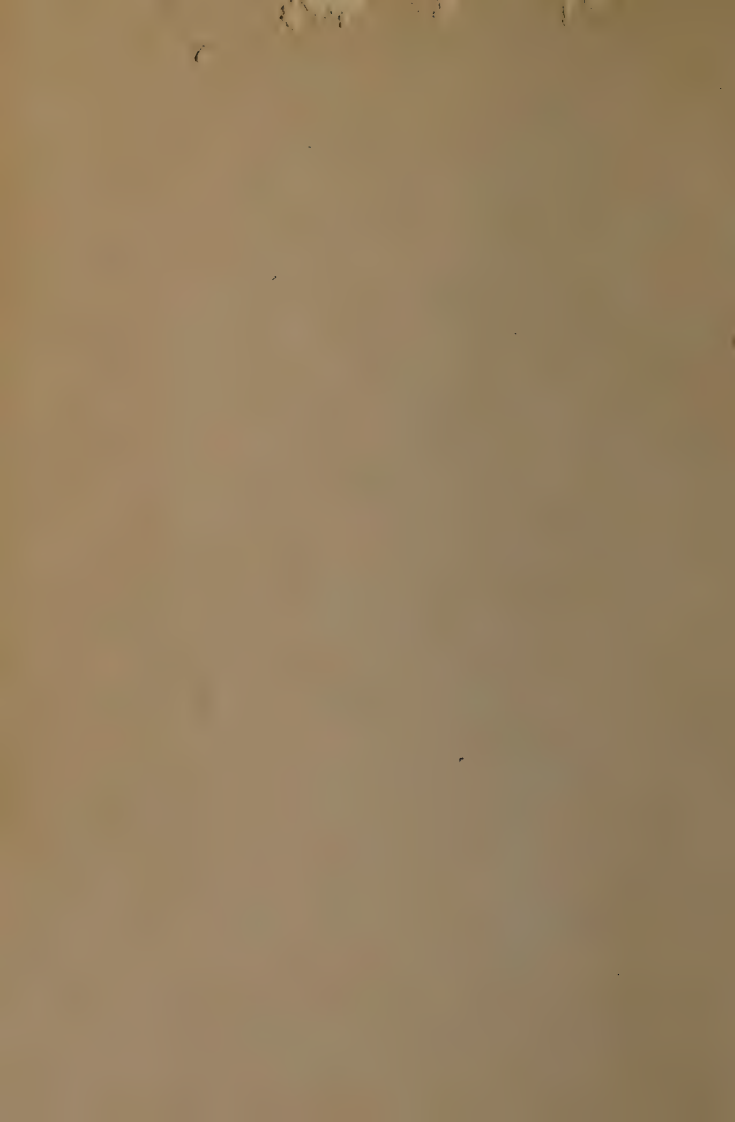
TO THE DEAR MOTHER.

Since you gave so much of your sweet self to Isabel when you gave her to life, it seems as if this little sketch ought in some way to be linked to your name, which was so dear to her, and which was on her lips when she was breathing out her life to God. So, with inexpressible gratitude to you for giving her to me, I dedicate it to you, on this anniversary of our marriage eight years ago, praying that the Father who has taken her may be your lamp, your staff, and your comfort, and that He may add yet many years to the measure of your own precious life, before he calls you to join her on that other shore, where the great company are rapidly gathering, and where no shadows shall fall across your pathway.

Affectionately, your son,

S. LEROY BLAKE.

Cleveland, O., Oct. 25, 1879.



I.

WHY THIS SKETCH APPEARS.

Any life which does its part well, is worth recording. Stir and noise are not always the measure of effectiveness. Quietest things sometimes do most. It is not the crashing thunder-peal, filling the air with its deafening roar, but the silent electric current which slides along its track of flame from cloud to earth, which does damage. You do not hear the blow which strikes the icy fetters off the brooks and fields, and lets them leap out into the glad, new life of spring. A life inspired by principle, though no loud-mouthed trumpets proclaim its worth, as surely bears fruit as the tree on which you can see, but cannot hear, the bursting of the buds into blossoms, and the growth of the blossoms into apples. Such a life of quiet but decisive power is worth imitating. It shows what grace can do for men. Its annals are an inspiration. It proves that life cannot be measured by figures on a dial.

“We live in deeds, not years ; in thoughts, not breaths ;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.”

Because the life, whose annals we here offer, as we believe did its part so well, was one of such quiet but yet decisive and beneficent power, and affords an example of such noble and unselfish living, we send forth this sketch, in the hope that her memory, as did her life, may be the means under God of winning some to that same joy in believing which was the light of her living, and the glory of her dying.

We also send forth this sketch on what we trust will be its errand of blessing, as a testimony of love, and to express our gratitude to God for letting such a life be linked to ours for so many years. Said one of the young ladies with whom she had grown up, "I thank God that I knew her." Much more may they say so, of whose life she was a most precious part. We have not thought to add anything to the world's overstocked market of biographical literature, but to trace the leading points of her beautiful life for the hearts that loved her. We have not therefore written for critical eyes, but for eyes too dim with tears of sympathy and affection to see with the sharpness of criticism. This has been prepared for hearts, not heads.

II.

HER BIRTH AND ANCESTRY.

About thirty years ago a plump, rosy-cheeked little girl, of gentle and winning ways, might have been seen playing about the ancestral home on "Oak Hill," in the beautiful town of Pepperell, Mass. That little girl was the subject of this sketch. She was born July 1, 1847, and at her christening received the name of Isabella Mary.

On her mother's side she was a descendant of the Spaulding family, some branches of which have been distinguished for their men and women of note. The line of her father's ancestry runs very far back into the past. It appears in history as early as A. D. 258, when Laurentius, or St. Laurence, chief deacon of Sixtus, Bishop of Rome, suffered martyrdom. The name is supposed to be derived from the Latin word *Laurus*, and according to the town records of Hingham, Mass., signifies "flourishing like a bay-tree." Men of this name have held high positions in church and state, both in England and America. Bishops, clergymen, scholars, statesmen, and soldiers have sprung from the family.

The family in this country descended from John Lawrence, who was born at Wisset, England, about 1609, and came to New England 1630-1635, and settled in Watertown, Mass. Many of his descendants have been marked men in the history of the country. Samuel Lawrence, the father of Amos and Abbott Lawrence, was in his field, in the town of Groton, Mass., when the news came of the march of the British on Concord. He mounted his horse, gave the alarm in adjoining towns, joined his company at the meeting-house in Groton, and reached the scene of action in season to give the advancing troops a hot reception. He was wounded at the battle of Bunker Hill. His hat and coat, pierced by the enemy's balls, were kept as relics for many years. "At the time of his marriage, while the ceremony was in progress, the tolling of the meeting-house bell called out the minute-men; whereupon he parted from his bride as soon as the rite was finished, and marched to Rhode Island, but shortly returned on furlough for a few days; after which she did not see him again until the last day of the year." He was promoted to the rank of major; fought in many of the hardest battles of the Revolution; was elected to fill honorable places of trust by his townsmen; was a deacon of the church in Groton; and was foremost in founding the academy at Groton, known as Lawrence Academy.

Thomas Lawrence, of another branch of the family of John, was captain of a company from Pepperell and vicinity, which enlisted for the French war, in 1758. He is represented as a man of gigantic stature, herculean strength, bold and courageous. He lost his life in battle near Lake George, New York. He was great-grandfather of Isabel.

His son Thomas, her grandfather, was wounded at the battle of Bunker Hill, and figured conspicuously in the military history of those stirring times. He was promoted to the rank of major.

His son Luther, her father, is described as a man of great force of character, a quality which he gave in large measure to his children. The fact that he was often placed by his townsmen in that triumvirate of the New England town known as "The selectmen," and that he repeatedly represented his town in the General Court, where he was contemporary with such men as Robert Rantoul, Henry Wilson, and Horace Mann, shows the esteem in which he was held in Pepperell. He was very fond of his children, upon whom he stamped so strongly his own moral and intellectual likeness. Hence, though he died in 1854, when Isabel was but seven years old, she retained a vivid recollection of him, and loved his memory as only such a child can. After she came to her womanhood, I have seen the eyes glisten with tears, and the lips quiver with emotion, as she spoke his name with a

daughter's deep affection. The family name has a noble record, and she was herself a noble specimen of the line.

I. The line of descent from JOHN LAWRENCE is as follows: NATHANIEL, son of JOHN, born Oct. 15, 1639, and lived at Groton.

II. JOHN, son of NATHANIEL, born July 29, 1667, and lived at Groton and Lexington.

III. THOMAS, son of JOHN, born Dec. 23, 1691, and lived at Groton.

IV. CAPT. THOMAS, son of THOMAS, born Sept. 3, 1720, and lived at Groton and Pepperell.

V. MAJ. THOMAS, son of CAPT. THOMAS, born Dec. 25, 1757, and lived in Pepperell.

VI. LUTHER, son of MAJ. THOMAS, was born at Pepperell, Nov. 7, 1801, and lived at Pepperell, where he died July 28, 1854. Isabel was of the SEVENTH generation from John, the originator of the family in America.

III.

THE GIRL AT HOME.

As a girl, she displayed those qualities of character which gave such ripe richness and winsomeness to her womanhood. It was a common remark among her friends, that Isabel would be a minister's wife,—they little dreaming that the word spoken in jest was a true prophecy. During this early period of her life, Rev. Lyman Cutler was pastor of the church in Pepperell, and he, together with his estimable wife, seems to have made a profound impression upon her mind; for she often spoke of them, dwelt on the loveliness of Mrs. Cutler, and told what a treat it was for her to go to the minister's with her father and mother. I believe Mr. and Mrs. Cutler used to call her their little girl. It was a matter of common remark that she looked like Mrs. Cutler. Certainly in loveliness of character she was like the minister's wife whom she never forgot. How much the influence of this Christian woman had to do in shaping the life and heart of the little girl who adored her, can never be known.

As a child, I suppose that Isabel was like other children. But I cannot learn that she was ever the

fountain of any disturbances or contentions such as are common to little folks, nor can I learn that she was ever a disturbing element in the home. On the contrary, both there and among her mates, she was, as in all her subsequent life, a peace-maker, and without a shadow of doubt received the blessing promised to such,—“they shall be called the children of God.” I am sure no daughter could ever be more obedient and dutiful.

As a child she developed that force of character which was a marked feature of the woman. She never usurped the place, nor put herself forward, but her mates looked upon her as a sort of leader, and felt safe to follow Bell, as she was familiarly called, wherever she led. For she did not make up her mind hastily, but when it was made up, she was likely to be right. Consequently the influence she exerted over the girls of her own age was lasting, and we may believe was among the means used by God to bring them all to the Savior. That I am not alone in this opinion appears from a letter written to her by a Miss Shattuck, who was a teacher to whom Isabel was sincerely attached, in which she urges her to become a Christian because of the influence her act would have upon her mates. Subsequent facts proved how correct Miss Shattuck was.

Another evidence of her force of character was to be seen in the quiet yet unflinching way in

which she sought to do what she believed to be right. She was not obstinate, for she would always yield rather than dispute. But when she had made up her mind for herself, her duty was plain, and she could not be changed. I do not think it betraying any confidence she would have me keep to say, and it gives me great pleasure to be able to say it, that when any difference of opinion between us occurred, which was not often, her view usually prevailed in the end, for it was rarely wrong.

Her force of character was also shown in the quiet but decided choice by which she became a Christian. The step was taken under circumstances which showed her independent way of thinking and acting. There was no special religious interest, except in her heart. She stood alone in the vestry of the church to ask the prayers of God's people. But she was not long alone, for she carried with her all the girls of her set. From that step of this girl of 14 dated a religious interest which greatly blessed the church. Largely through her influence the girls on "Oak Hill" formed a prayer-meeting, of which she was in no small degree the spiritual life and light. Thus, at the age of from 12 to 15, she was doing, in her quiet way, most efficient work for the Master. When she had chosen Christ, she at once wrote to the teacher whom she loved so well, and to whom she owed so much.

PEPPERELL, June 8, 1862.

DEAR MISS SHATTUCK:

* * You cannot imagine how happy I was when I saw that letter was from you, for I almost knew its pages would be filled with that *one* subject which I love to hear better than anything else.

* * Oh! Miss Shattuck, how many times I have wished you would speak to me on the subject of religion, but never did I feel like saying anything first; so it was always put off. We would talk about everything else but that one thing which is of so much more importance than anything else we could have said. But now I feel like talking with any one on that subject. [Her subsequent life made these words good.] I had often prayed to my Heavenly Father that I might become a true and sincere Christian, and now I feel that I have given my heart to this Savior to be his forever, for how could I deny him any longer! All he asks is, "Come," "believe on me and thou shalt have everlasting life." It is so easy, and yet it is so hard. I know that I have led a very sinful life.

* * But I came and gave myself to Christ "just as I am," and I trust that he has forgiven my sins; and oh! what a happy feeling it is! I love to go by myself alone, and pray to my Heavenly Father, and read his Holy Bible: I take so much pleasure in it.

I remain yours truly,

BELL.

She was not yet 15 years old. But here are expressions of Christian character, such as we might look for in one of larger experience. They were not the enthusiastic outgushings of a young life

which soon spend themselves ; for to the end it was her custom and delight to go by herself alone and pray, and to the end the Word of God was her great and constant joy. Religion was a beautiful reality to this young girl. It lost none of its charms to her, as she grew to that splendid womanhood which her Christian character made very winsome.

Of the prayer-meeting named above, she writes, under date of Jan. 12, 1863 :

DEAR MISS SHATTUCK :

* * * * Last week Nellie, Fannie, Katie, Lucena, and myself met down at Charlotte's at a prayer-meeting. It was very interesting indeed.
* * * * There is nothing I love to go to so much as these. I feel that my hope in Christ grows stronger as each day I grow older. Oh ! how I wish that each one of my schoolmates would come and love this Savior *now* !

Very affectionately yours,

BELL.

In the same letter she speaks of personal conversation with several of her young friends, in which she tried faithfully to point them to the Savior. In a letter written the following April, she says,—
“I am never so happy as when talking about Christ.” At this early age her hope was anchoring itself within the veil, and her faith never faltered in its steady allegiance to God, till it was changed into glorified vision.

Her whole home-life was tinctured by this spirit which made her so beautiful a Christian. In all her thoughts and desires she was perfectly pure and innocent. Life was a great pleasure to her; she enjoyed it with keen relish, and with all her heart entered into those sports which are the delight of young people of her age. She often took part in the exhibitions they used to have at the "Oak Hill" school-house, in which she always acquitted herself, as I have learned from others, with great merit. She was a fine reader, and had a rare faculty of personating different characters. But whatever she did she never forgot that she was a Christian. It is safe to say, that it is not usual to find at so young an age a character so ripe, and in all respects so firmly established.

The testimony of one of the girls with whom her childhood was spent, and who was one of her most intimate friends, confirms what has been said. The letter bears date of October 25, 1879.

"Mrs. B. said this day was her wedding anniversary. The thought carried me back to the day when she left us to go with you, back through her girlhood to childhood, and her life came before me in one sweet, beautiful whole; complete, it seemed to me, as child, girl, woman. When at school she was a favorite with all, and we were only too happy to get a share of her society. I used to wonder why she was so attractive, and have since found an answer in that quick, generous

sympathy, that forgetfulness of self and thoughtfulness of others, which in later years has been so thoroughly characteristic of her.

"In all the years of close companionship as schoolmates, no word of hers was ever a taunt, or had a touch of unkindness. I think that record of her school-life speaks volumes; for children oftentimes give pain by thoughtless, unkind words. As she grew older, and we went to the little prayer-meetings, which largely owed their support to her faithful activity as a Christian girl, no voice was sweeter than hers in prayer, or more ready to say a word for the Savior she loved so well.

"But no words of mine can express the feeling of her worth and goodness. The grave has closed over a dearly loved friend, and sometimes it seems too sad to be true. Then when I look back and think of her life, and the blessed memories she has left, can I be too thankful that I have known her? I try to find comfort in the thought that she was with us so long. 'The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away.'"

If the whole town were to voice their feelings, no different testimony would be given. But was she, as we have said, the same kind, affectionate, gentle girl at home, winning the love of the whole household? The home-life is the best test. He who stood to her instead of her own father,—a man of few words,—said, "Bell was always a good girl." The sister younger than she, wrote,—
"You asked me if she was always as lovable as she has been since you have known her. She has

always been so ever since I can remember. I think she was about twelve years old when she became interested in religion. At that time I was only about six years old. But I remember that when I was small I must have been a good deal of trouble, and Bell was always so kind to me." The letter goes on to mention little acts of kindness, which showed the goodness of her heart, which need not be repeated. She was as a girl what she afterwards was as a woman.

IV.

AT SCHOOL.

At about this period in her life began her school-days in Lawrence Academy, Groton, Mass. Her course of study here was broken in upon by a very severe fit of typhoid fever, which came near taking her life, and did shatter her constitution, so that ever after it she was very frail. This happened when she was 16. She returned to school as soon as her health permitted, and took high rank as a scholar, standing at the head of most of her classes. She was gifted with a singularly retentive memory, and therefore she kept what she learned. I remember especially an examination of her French class, at which she acquitted herself with great credit.

She carried to the school the same qualities of character which had made her so marked at home, and she was for a like reason a leader and a favorite among the scholars of the academy. She also took with her the same Christian character which gave her an influence over her mates; and therefore at Groton she was as earnest for the salvation of her schoolmates as she had been at Pep-

perell. The first time I ever saw her was in a prayer-meeting which many of the students attended, and her very marked demeanor attracted my notice. Evidently, I thought, she is a devoutly Christian girl, who must exert a powerful influence over her fellow-pupils. My conjecture was correct. Here is the testimony of one who was her roommate and most intimate friend at school :

TROY, N. H., Aug. 15, 1879.

REV. S. L. BLAKE :

DEAR SIR :

* * * I first heard of your loss through the *Congregationalist*, and I was truly grieved at hearing the sad news of dear Mrs. Blake's death, and do most heartily sympathize with you all. In her death I too have lost a dear friend. Her name was ever dear to me, and full of pleasant remembrances. As a schoolmate and a room-mate she became very dear to me. In school she was greatly beloved by teachers and pupils, for it was there she exhibited those traits of character which made her life so beautiful. Always cheerful and happy, so unselfish in everything, we could but feel she was the joy of the school.

She always manifested an earnest desire for the spiritual welfare of the students, attending regularly the religious meetings of the academy, and often was her voice heard in prayer for the conversion of the scholars. * * * *

Truly yours,

MRS. A. B. DORT.

Other testimony might be added to show that she was as loyal to Christ at the academy as at home. And I cannot doubt that it was partly due to her quiet influence that the school was visited with a remarkable revival in the spring of 1864, when very many of the pupils became Christians, some of whom afterwards became preachers of the gospel.

Her health required that she should leave the school in the spring of 1865. She would have graduated the following summer with high honors.

V.

THE WIFE.

She was rapidly ripening into that womanhood in which her life shone with richest lustre. The next few years do not require to be recorded, for the record would be but a repetition of what has been said. It is enough to say, that during these years before she left it as a wife, she was the light of the home in which she was a dutiful daughter, and a loving, self-denying sister. During this period her brother Luther died, to whom she was very strongly attached, as she was to all her friends. This is what she wrote when the sad news came: "It is a house of mourning, but we must be resigned to God's will, trusting Him. Oh! what a mercy to have a Savior to go to! * * * It is so sad for us: but we know there is a higher power who does all things, and to Him we submit."

We pass now to that period of her life when her splendid womanhood displayed its rare qualities to best advantage. On Wednesday, Oct. 25th, 1871, she gave herself to me to stand by my side in my chosen work of the gospel ministry, and the prophetic word, spoken in jest of the girl, was

fulfilled. If it were proper to push aside the veil and publish the correspondence which prefaced this day, it would show a wealth and a depth of affection which should satisfy the hungriest heart. But this was only a pledge of what the wife was ready to bestow upon the husband.

I.—FEELINGS WITH WHICH SHE BECAME A WIFE.

She did not enter into this relation unthinkingly, but with a full consciousness of its duties, and with dependence upon God for strength to meet them. Let her own words speak. In a letter written the week before her marriage she says,—“Have you thought that a week from to-day (Oct. 21, 1871) we shall be at your home in Conn., and two weeks from to-day, with God’s blessing, we shall be at our new home in Concord? There we begin our new life, and we cannot be too watchful of ourselves. I earnestly pray that I shall be a loving, faithful wife to you, and I do pray that God will bless us to work faithfully for him, and do all we can to make ourselves happy, and others happy around us. I feel so wholly unfitted for this position of life; but God is able to give me strength, and my trust is in Him. I hope we shall be faithful and true Christians.” With such thoughts and desires, the charming Miss became the “loving, faithful wife,” doing all she could to make “others

happy around us," and finding her own happiness in that. How well she carried out her desires to be a "loving, faithful wife," words are too unutterably poor to tell. The sweetness of her life will be a perpetual fragrance.

2.—HOW SHE WAS RECEIVED AT CONCORD.

She was received with open arms, when we came to "our new home in Concord" to "begin our new life," which were reluctantly torn apart to let her go to Cleveland, and which, with a great sob of grief, were reached out after her in vain, when God called her home. I do not think I ever knew one who won such universal love and respect as she did, from young and old, men and women, in the church where she belonged, and out of it. The children loved her. Every one in Concord who knew her loved her, and mourned when she went away. Ladies of age and experience deferred to her, and sought her advice. Higher compliment could not have been paid her. But I know that the compliment came from those whose regard for her could not express itself too intensely.

She naturally felt that the lines had fallen to her in very pleasant places, when she went to Concord, and that her lot as a minister's wife was not hard. I remember she once read an article in the *Congregationalist*, setting forth the abuses to which min-

isters' wives are subjected. After reading it, she said, "My experience is exactly opposite to that." She sat down and sketched two cases. One was of some person whom she knew; the other represented her own. The contrast expresses exactly her thought. This is it:

"We have in mind a minister's wife, whose history may not come amiss here, and perhaps help to shed light on this question. A beautiful young girl from one of our adjoining towns, whose life had been one of quiet, and who had been unused to hardships, found the man of her choice to be a minister. She pledged her life to him. In due time the two were made happy in marriage, and entered upon their new life with bright hopes for the future in store for them. Truly, it seemed as if the lines had fallen to them in pleasant places, when they were settled among their (said to be) kind and considerate people. This devoted wife had determined to do all she could to increase her husband's usefulness, and accordingly entered upon her new labors with zeal and earnestness.

"As soon as politeness would allow, the ordeal she was to pass through began. One by one the people came to call upon the minister's new wife. She was expected to become personally interested in each one, to participate alike in their joys and sorrows, and sympathize as best she could. The first weeks being spent in receiving calls, she must now begin to return: and not only to return calls, she must go with her husband to see the sick, the poor, the sorrowing. She must attend the regular prayer-meeting of the church, besides having a

weekly prayer-meeting at her own house. She must make herself agreeable to every one with whom she comes in contact, and must always be tidy and presentable; which is no difficult matter, considering the average minister's salary. Can you wonder that she is utterly astonished to find that she has wedded a parish instead of her husband? Can we be surprised that her husband becomes a dyspeptic? For where has her *home* been all this time? Something must be neglected. If she neglects the parish, she constantly hears some one say,—“You have not called on us in so long a time.” So the neglect must fall on the home-life, unless she turns about and becomes the wife of her husband instead of the wife of the parish.

“Let us turn from this to one of the more fortunate wives, who was permitted to enjoy the same rights and privileges with any other lady in the society. She was not expected to attend a meeting every night in the week, or to make calls every afternoon, but simply had her freedom to do as she pleased. It was her fortune to have a pleasant home, and her delight to make it attractive, not only to her husband, but also to the people. As one is happy, so in proportion is one useful. Was it wonderful, then, that the young people all flocked about their minister? The very atmosphere of his home-life had been such as to make him one with them. A minister, to win souls, must win hearts. His wife had been able to be his helpmate, because she had been left to make his home for him.”

This last picture she painted in accord with her own experience. She was always happy, because

always free, in the work of the gospel which fell to her to do. Thanks to the people who loved her!

3.—HER LOVING, UNSELFISH HEART.

If I might lift the covering which hides the sacred privacy of conjugal affection, and publish the letters which she expected no eye but that of her husband to see, they would show plainly enough what there was in her which made her an incomparable wife. But that covering must not be disturbed, nor that sacred privacy be profaned. Enough was visible in her life to all who knew her to give a hint of what she was as a companion. The reality was too blessed for language to express it.

Her quiet, gentle ways fitted her to move in her station in life without jostling against any, or wounding even the most sensitive nature. She was remarkably kind in her way of receiving all who came into her home, and she had a wonderfully happy faculty of making people feel welcome. Every one who had been in her society once, longed to enjoy it again. She was wise and judicious, and never said anything to be repented of, or which would stir up strife and ill-feelings. I never learned that a lisp of unfavorable criticism was ever uttered against her, during the eight years in which she occupied the somewhat delicate place of a pastor's

wife ; neither did I ever learn that a single word from her lips was ever the occasion of any offence.

When Mrs. Madison presided over the presidential mansion at Washington, Henry Clay said to her, with characteristic gallantry, "Everybody loves Mrs. Madison." With a frankness peculiarly her own, she replied, "That is because Mrs. Madison loves everybody." Isabel loved everybody, and everybody loved her. She brightened every life she touched, and every one who came into her presence felt that she was full of profoundest sympathy, of which each had a full share. For eight years I never heard her say an ill word of any one ; but always, with tears in her voice and tears in her eyes, she had a word of apology when most would have had only words of blame. In an eminent degree, as a woman as well as a girl, she was a peacemaker. Instead of planning to stir up strife, she always planned to smooth the rough edges. She could endure almost anything better than a dispute.

She was remarkably unselfish and self-forgetful. I think she was one of those rare characters who are more ready to do for and think of others, than others are to do for and think of them. I do not think I ever saw a person who had less of self. She did not think of herself as much as her frail strength required. In this she was an exception to the rule. She always loved to make what calls

she could on the people of the parish. But few could know how it taxed her. For she was so full of sympathy, which shone in her face and thrilled in her touch, that she seemed to invite confidence. At any rate, people could not resist telling her all their troubles, for her heart and ear were always open. In her home and everywhere she had the same sweet, unselfish spirit, which was thoughtful of the comfort and welfare of others. More could not be said, but it is just and true praise of her.

The sunshine and sweetness of her soul made her face radiant and her life magnetic. Very few could resist being drawn to her winning face. Her soul was in it, and there was the light of a pure and lovely spirit in her expressive eyes. Clouds could not long sail in any sky where she shed her light.

She loved her home passionately. She was, as we say, a home body. She was satisfied to be at home. No place was to her like her home. It was here that her queenliness of character appeared preëminently. When, after a winter of boarding, we were once more to be under our own roof, and to have our own family altar, her cup of delight was full. Solomon's description of a virtuous woman was true of her: "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." Her affectionate nature was deep. The world outside saw little demonstration on her part. But in the safe shelter of her home her love flowed unrestrained, with a depth and a

strength to satisfy the most exacting heart. Nothing could wean her from the home of her childhood while the mother she adored was in it. Her mother, her brothers and sisters, her home, and her husband, were her heart's idols.

4.—AS A CRITIC AND LOVER OF LITERATURE.

Her fine taste in the art of putting things made her invaluable to me as a critic. She seemed to know as by instinct what way of stating the truth would win attention. She had, as extracts show, a happy faculty of saying things in a very simple and natural way, and without needless words. It would be impossible to estimate the true worth of her wise and kindly suggestions in this regard. So sensible and practical were they, that they were like a short treatise on homiletics. She proved what a help a wise, faithful, loving wife can be to her husband in his literary work. No one else can criticize so faithfully and so well. If my style has any points which make it pleasing to the popular ear, she, in no small degree, deserves the credit of it. If it has no such points, it is because I have failed to profit by her suggestions. I rarely ever preached a sermon or gave an address which I did not first submit to her for criticism.

Her ideas of the office and sacredness of the gospel ministry were so high, that she was a

constant inspiration and a powerful incentive. With her sitting before me, to listen in her quiet but earnest and appreciative way, I felt sustained, as by a spirit in full accord with my message, to preach the gospel. It was always so from the first time I preached to her as her pastor in Pepperell, till the last time I preached to her as her husband, in Cleveland, on the evening of July 6, 1879. What I have felt others have, for she never heard a sermon without thanking the preacher for it, if the opportunity were offered. She knew the value of a kind word to one who is called to preach the gospel. The pastor in Pepperell wrote of her, after her death,—“In my days of trial which came to me in the early days of my pastorate, she always spoke cheering words to encourage me, and was pleased to speak kindly of my sermons.” “To a few words spoken by her, at various times, I feel that I owe much.” Many times has she said,—“I never hear a sermon which presents Christ, from which I do not get some good, however much I may find in it which I could criticise, if I were so disposed.” Her idea of listening to preaching was, to get good; and the sermon must be very poor in which she could find nothing. If she had a kindly word to say, she always said it with such sweet earnestness in looks and voice, that one did not feel complimented, but encouraged. With such a listener, and that listener one’s wife, one could not

well help being inspired with the true spirit of the gospel ministry. She has done more than words can tell to put this mind in me which was in Paul : " For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." " For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." Perhaps the reader will be able to understand from this, how much I miss her in this part of my work. I have not yet learned to go into the pulpit without a trembling sense of weakness, nor to come from it without an anxious fear that the right thing has not been said in the right way to point men to the cross. A word from her, on the way home from church, if she could honestly speak it, would quiet my fears. If she could not, she would frankly say so, and why, and, in whatever criticisms she might have to offer, make herself as great a help to me as if she had nothing but praise to give.

She has made the work of the ministry seem more holy to me, because her gentle hands and life have touched it with me. In times of misgiving about my fitness for so holy a calling, she has given me courage by the kind and inspiring things she said, which I may not repeat. They are stored up in memory, to be kept for those times of sinking of heart which I know must come, when she can speak to me no longer, except in the treasured words which have fallen so sweetly from her lips, and which

can never be forgotten. I am painfully sensible that the work I do is very far short of any worthy excellence, but it is infinitely better than it would have been if she had not for eight years been so linked to all my life, as its chief moulding force. I cannot give her too great praise as a helpmate in the work of the gospel.

Her fine sensibilities and keen sense of the beautiful made her a poet by nature. Her life was an exquisite poem. She was a great lover of some of Mrs. Browning's poems. One of her special favorites was "Isobel's Child." Tennyson was also a delight to her, and often would she ask me to listen, as she would read some gem from his works, with rare force of expression and a quick appreciation of its sentiment. She also took great pleasure in reading the lives and poems of Phebe and Alice Cary. Very few entered more fully than she into the true spirit of poetry. It was in her soul. Here is an exquisite little fragment which she wrote, which testifies to this fact. As one said, it is just like her. If it is not classic, it has the soul of poetry in it. She thought it out one winter's evening in Concord, as she sat by the window, while one of the first snows was noiselessly falling.

QUESTIONS TO THE SNOW-FLAKES.

Dear little snow-flakes, falling so fast,
Where do they keep you?—in wonder we ask :
Up in the heavens, above the blue sky?
Where have you been in the summer gone by?

Who lives where you live, and what are their names?
Where did you wash, to remove all your stains?
Who made you, like jewels, to hang on the trees,
And to float like white feathers away on the breeze?

Dear little snow-flakes, falling so fast,
Like the stars of the evening when daylight is past,
Draping the earth in garments so white,
Filling the world with their beautiful light :

As I watch from my window and see you fall down,
With beautiful ermine covering the ground,
Each little snow-flake a gem all alone,—
Who flung you down from your beautiful home ?

I recall so vividly the evening when she wrote these lines! She caught the spirit of the scene, and simply translated it into beautiful expression. If you want to know what sort of an evening it was, and what sort of a feeling filled the soul, read these verses. To her, the evening and the falling snow were a poem. All she did was to write out and interpret the thoughts she read on the spotless page which nature opened to her eye. As I understand it, that is true poetry.

5.—TRIP TO EUROPE ILLUSTRATING HER LOVE OF
NATURE.

This love of the beautiful, which made her a natural poet, also made her an ardent lover of nature. She always appreciated and had an exclamation of delight for every sweet surprise of scenery. She loved the country, with its green grass, its wild-flowers, its thick tangled woods with their deep cooling shades, its carolling birds. The last time she was in Pepperell was in May before she died. The beautiful trailing arbutus was in its glory. She was a child again, and lived over the old days, and revelled to her fill in their delights, and came home with a memory of those spring mornings in the woods which never faded.

In 1876 we travelled three months in Europe. Extracts from her diary tell better than I can the impressions fixed upon her mind: "We sailed from New York July 12, 1876. * * * * If one wishes to realize the full meaning of that verse, 'Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hands,' he will do so, I know, by taking one voyage across the ocean. It is a peculiar sensation to feel that one is moving along on the face of the great deep, in a little iron bark as it were, which seems but a speck when looking on all sides of you and seeing nothing but a vast world of water. I think I felt, more than ever

before, my utter dependence upon my Heavenly Father, and felt the support of His loving arms about us as He so carefully shielded us from harm and danger. I hope I have learned lessons from this life on the ocean which I shall never forget." Speaking of her first view of Ireland, she says,— "The first thing that attracted my attention was the fields of green divided into squares by hedges. I think there were as many shades of green as there were squares—on account of the scarcity of rain, I suppose. And yet, to me, the different shades added very much to the picturesqueness of the scene. * * * I must not forget to mention the first 'ivy green' I saw, which was growing on arches in such a way as to remind me of pictures I had seen of cathedral ruins, where the ivy had climbed over them till they were literally covered with green." After getting ashore, passing through the ordeal of the custom-house, and dispatching a lunch, we proceeded from Queenstown to Cork. "We sailed up the river Lee," her diary continues, "and a more romantic little stream one could not imagine. I did not wonder that so many elegant residences nestled in among the beautiful forests of green trees and climbing vines." Of the ride to Blarney castle she writes,— "This was a charming drive of two hours, over hills and through valleys, and along beautiful lanes of arching trees and of evergreens. We reached the entrance of the cas-

tle at ten o'clock, * * * and after wending our way along a dusty lane, we stepped upon the doorstep of the old ruin. An old lady stood there, evidently expecting her mite for showing us about. We ascended a long staircase, winding, massive, and grand in its structure, and of solid stone. Up and up we climbed, until I began to despair of reaching the summit, occasionally stopping to take a look out of the long narrow windows used as port-holes in olden times for the archers to shoot from in case of an invasion. I never shall forget the feeling I had when I stood upon the top of that rocky mass. For a moment I felt as if what had not given way was going to, and would carry us in the fall. We did not kiss the Blarney stone, for it was below our reach, but we gathered some ivy leaves and stones for mementos."

We went from Cork to Killarney. She says,—
"We reached Killarney station at about 6 o'clock, and were hustled into a cab, where we quietly remained till all the trunks were packed over our heads, and I thought if the top should fall through we should all be crushed. Fortunately no accident occurred, and in half an hour's time we drove up to the Royal Victoria hotel." She could hardly find words to express her delight, as she stood and gazed on the beautiful scenery. She says,—
"As I sit looking from my window upon these rugged hills and beautiful lakes, I can think

of nothing I have seen that will compare with their beauty." She always said that the most delightful spot she saw in Europe was the lakes of Killarney, because they were her first introduction to the old world, and therefore made most vivid impressions upon her. Just the expression she used to tell her thought was,—“I can only say of this lovely little place, ‘sweet exile from Paradise.’”

I might quote other extracts, in which she speaks of the ride through the gap of Dunloe, and the tour of the lakes; our visit to the Duke of Westminster's palace at Chester; to the English lakes; to London and Paris; to Switzerland;—but these serve to illustrate her appreciative love and enjoyment of nature. She had her own characteristic way of taking in scenes and photographing them upon her mind. I remember when crossing the Brünig Pass, one of the very finest among the Alps, that she sat back in the carriage quietly, saying little, and with her eyes closed much of the time. I thought she was losing the thrilling views, and spoke to her about it. She assured me she was getting it all; and sure enough, for she would often give such vivid descriptions of that ride across that pass, as almost to make the listener believe he could see the very spot. She said very little; was never a person of many words; did not go into ecstasies;—but she was sure to get vivid and

accurate impressions, have quite as keen pleasure as those more demonstrative, and always said something worth being said when she spoke about what she had seen. I think one secret of her love of nature was, she saw in it the work of her Heavenly Father's loving hand.

6.—THE CHANGE FROM CONCORD TO CLEVELAND.

She had, in certain respects, a very intense nature. Hence, ties of friendship bound her very strongly. They were never broken. If new ones were formed, the old ones remained strong. Hence, when she came to leave Concord for Cleveland, leave the friends whom she had tried and proved for six years, for she knew not what, the strain upon her was tremendous. The first weeks in the new parish were weeks of unutterable homesickness. But this gave place to a deep, unselfish love for the work in Cleveland, to which she became convinced God had called us. She lived to feel that the change, though hard, was wise. Her own words can tell it best. The following was written to a lady in Concord:

CLEVELAND, Dec. 23, 1878.

MY DEAR MRS. W——:

* * * It is more than a year since we left our home in Concord, and although it has passed quickly, much of it seems like a dream. I am quite willing the first of our stay should seem like

one, for they were days of homesickness. I did not enjoy leaving off the old and putting on the new. But things have changed, and I am happy again in our pleasant relations. We are very fond of the people here: they certainly deserve to be loved, for their kindness has been unstinted. Notwithstanding, our intense love for our former home and friends can never grow faint. * * * * * I would tell you a little about our church, only I could not do it justice in a letter. We are having a very interesting religious interest. Over seventy-five asked the prayers of God's people two weeks ago, and more have since. Nearly one hundred have united with the church since a year ago. They are a devoted, working people. God is evidently blessing them for the earnest efforts they put forth. Such a work cannot be done by a few, but all must be interested. To-night we have our social. The ladies are making a great preparation for the supper. We are as happy here as we could ask to be, and the work is a very encouraging one. * * *

Your loving friend,

ISABEL L. BLAKE.

Nothing could shake her loyalty to the people who welcomed her so warmly when she came among them a young wife, and who made her life among them so spotlessly happy. Nor could anything shake her loyalty to duty; and so her love was getting firmly rooted in Cleveland. For she believed the Lord had a work for us to do here, and that was sufficient for her.

7.—LOVE FOR CHRIST THE CROWN-JEWEL OF HER LIFE.

But the love which towered above every other, and which nothing could shake, was her love for her blessed Savior. From the time she gave her heart to the Master at the age of 14, till she died at the age of 32,—eighteen years,—her love never grew cold, nor did her faith waver. In the dreadful sickness of the last weeks, and in the very last hours when she knew she could not get well, her faith and love stood firm upon the Rock.

Her Christian character was one of the noticeable things about her that made her so winsome to every one. Letters already quoted put her Christian thought in her own words. In 1869 she went to Brooklyn, N. Y., to spend the winter. During her stay she was quite ill. On recovering, she writes to one of the young ladies in Pepperell,—“I am quite like myself again, and can you wonder I am delighted? I have had everything done for me, and I suppose that is one reason I have got better. But with whatever care we may have, our sickness is in the hand of a higher power. I can only say that I have been kindly and wonderfully dealt by.” When we chanced to be separated from each other for a short time, which was not often, her letters were a great comfort, both because of the expressions of her love with which they were always so rich, and because of her sweet

confidence and faith in God. A few quotations will illustrate the beautiful Christian spirit which gave fragrance to all she said, or did, or thought. Writing from Chicago, she says, speaking of our people,—“God has certainly been very good to us, and given us many blessings,—yes, blessings without number. I am thankful, and hope that we both shall be willing to lead unselfish lives for Him.” At another time, speaking of kind words from one of our most esteemed Concord friends, she wrote,—“How much God gives us. I hope we shall be faithful in return.” At still another time she wrote,—“I want to be much to you, and help you in your work, so that the whole end and aim of our life may be for the glory of God.” Such expressions as these, which enriched almost every letter she ever wrote me as a wife, show how entirely her heart was in the work God had assigned to our lives. I think also that they show, very conclusively, that the prayer for divine help with which she came to bless and give joy to my life by her sweet companionship, was fully and graciously answered. They illustrate, too, how ready she was to see the hand of God in every blessing, and to recognize His claim to her life, and love, and strength.

While her whole thought was to be useful and helpful, I do not think it ever occurred to her that she was *so* useful and helpful. She had too little

self-consciousness for that. She knew that people esteemed her; but she never seemed to attribute this esteem to any virtue which others saw in her. She simply aimed to do her duty, and took delight in doing it. Dr. Cuyler said of Washington Irving,—“Fame never turned his head.” She was not spoiled by the love and admiration with which people regarded her. The sweet purities of her life were never soiled by any such pride. Whatever she had to be thankful for she gratefully received as a gift from God, which she never attributed to any worthiness in herself, but to His condescending love. It is safe to love such a soul. It was safe to love her, for I know that she never for one moment was betrayed into pride. She was still the same quiet, simple, winsome woman, thinking kindly and well of everybody, never wounding a single soul by sharp words or rudeness, and always loving to hide away from the public eye in her own home.

I cannot tell the help she has been to me. I never did anything without first asking her advice. Her rare good judgment, her sweet counsel, her prayers of undoubting faith, her pure and spotless life, her daily walk with God, the Christian joy and peace which filled her soul, the deep and prayerful interest which she took in the salvation of sinners,—all such qualities made her a tower of strength, and a Christian counsellor of rare wis-

dom. The New York *Evangelist*, speaking of the value of a true wife to a minister, says,—“How beyond all price to the minister, often burdened with perplexing cares, is the companionship of one who is his best counsellor and friend,—one who may suggest with freedom, and yet never wound, for her suggestions are those of the truest and tenderest affection. How soft is the radiance of this gentle presence, which lights up not merely the home, but life itself; how it cheers one in hours of despondency, and makes him strong again to go forth to the world, to take up once more the heavy task, and bear anew life’s burdens and cares! Such a wife is indeed man’s best friend this side heaven. Who that has such a friend—so near, so dear, so tender, and so true—will not daily fall on his knees, and bless the Being from whom he has received God’s best gift to man?” Although this was called forth by praise of another pastor’s wife, who well deserved it, they are none the less true of her who was the “good angel” of my home and of my life. A wife could not be more to a husband, nor fill a larger place in his usefulness, nor do more to add to it, than she. God only can know what He has been pleased to take away from me. He only can know what a blessing He gave me in her. Whatever His reasons for calling her home, He did not do so because I failed to appreciate her. She has been

of priceless worth to me. She has made my life over, and I bow gratefully to own her sweet power. There is a large place empty which she filled. I try to wait patiently till that day shall dawn which no shadow shall cloud, and whose joy no death, nor pain, nor falling tears shall mar.

8.—SIMPLICITY A CHARM OF HER RELIGIOUS LIFE.

Her wants were surprisingly few, as compared with most people's. All her tastes, as well as her whole manner of life, were exceedingly chaste and simple. She was so socially. In her home she was so. Those who saw her one day, saw her every day. The very atmosphere which surrounded her was that of beautiful simplicity. Her manner of dress was like herself. A characteristic remark dropped in a letter written from Chicago, without a thought that other eyes than mine would ever read it, exactly expresses the spirit which gave such a charm to her whole life, and imparted to it such beneficent power: "An old Quaker lady got on the car to-day, and I thought how pretty her dress compared to the ladies who sat opposite to her, with their gold chains, bracelets, etc. The face of that Quakeress was so restful, and her dress so neat, that I was almost tempted to tell her, and ask her if I couldn't join her band. I certainly am convinced that the worry of women over dress and finery is vain and wicked."

The woman spoke in these words. They simply voice herself. She shrank instinctively from everything which could possibly hint at love of display and publicity. If possible, her danger lay in the other and wiser direction. There was in her an unaffected purity of character which raised her above possibility of deception, and gave her that open frankness which made her life irresistibly attractive, and lent a charm and a beauty to her piety which made religion winsome, as people saw it in her daily life. Her mind could not "be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" by any of the vanities of the world. I believe her religious life illustrated the words of James: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

9.—HER RELIGION A REALITY.

The simplicity of her religious character appeared also in the matter-of-fact way in which she regarded Christian life. It was no mere theory with her. Of theory she knew or cared very little. She often said she could belong to almost any church, if it was Christ's. But her religion was something to live by every day. She was too guileless to wrest the word of God, but always

took it to mean what it said. Hence heaven was just as much of a reality to her, as really a place, as Concord, or Cleveland, or Pepperell, and God and Christ and the Holy Spirit were as real to her as her own friends. Her daily communion with them, and talk about them, was as if they were to her an actual, conscious presence.

I said religion was not to her a mere theory. She dealt with it, and talked to people about it, as if it were a matter of course. As one said of another,—“She never argued in respect to religious matters. She *lived* religion; it was a matter of experience with her; she had no doubt in regard to its reality; and it seemed like sacrilege to admit that there could be any valid objection to it.”* Hence she had a peculiar faculty of talking to people about religion, as if it were as real and precious to them as to her. Consequently she often had access to ears which would have been shut to most people. She could not understand how any one could help being interested in the question which to her was so momentous. In the last days, before she expected so soon to pass over the hidden line, and when, as it now seems, she was ripening for this great change, she said,—“I have everything to live for; and yet why will people cling so to this life, when heaven is so much more glorious?” Our conversation often turned upon

* *Congregationalist*, Sept. 17, 1879, p. 3.

the truths of God's word, and then upon the world to come, and always she had that same simple, unaffected faith, which had as much confidence in the reality of these things as if her eyes had seen what they now do see, and her hands had touched what they now do touch. Her Savior, to her, was not a myth, but a blessed reality, and the chiefest among ten thousands, and the one altogether lovely. I never heard her express the least doubt about her acceptance with God, and I do not think she had any.

To her, the Bible was the book of books. She loved to read it. Especially did she delight in the first epistle and the gospel of John. One of the sisters writes,—“I know one time when we were down home, Bell told me how beautiful she thought the fourteenth chapter of John was. I had always thought so too, but now it will seem more beautiful to me than ever.” She was not satisfied merely to say over the words of a chapter, and then lay the blessed book aside. She wanted to find its meaning, and learn the will of God. Always, in our morning devotions, we would linger over the passage, and talk about it, and make it a study. We were growing more and more into this habit, and the Bible was coming to be to both of us, more than ever, a marvellous book. Often, when she would remain at home on a Sabbath morning, I would find, on returning from church, that she had spent

the hour in reading God's word. Almost always she would say,—“I have found a text for you for next week;” and she would tell me her idea about it, and offer such practical thoughts as were sure to start a very inspiring train of reflection. In fact, I scarcely ever wrote a sermon which was not in some such way due to her. Often I got the plan and main points of the theme from her, and many of the discourses which she thus suggested were most blessed of God.

She always read the Bible as God's message to man, and as such she accepted it. She understood God to mean what He said. She never had any doubt about it. It was all real to her. The promises were not fictions; the threats were not myths. Christ was her Savior, because the Bible said so. Eternal life she was sure of, because God had promised it. She had no doubt about being accepted, because she had the sure word of Heaven. She loved the book. It was her guide, and the lamp to her path. In it alone she found the way to live, and so lived. During the last days, when she was able, we had our morning devotions at her bedside, and the last chapter she ever heard read was that wonderful one, the eighth of Romans. Her earthly communion with the word of God ended with these thrilling words, which fitly epitomize the faith in which she had lived: “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels,

nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." In such blessed, assuring faith she died, and nothing was able to separate her from the love of God.

It will be readily understood that prayer, with her, was not a mere repetition of words, but talking with God face to face about her soul's wants. It never seemed to occur to her that God would not hear her, that she was talking into the air. She prayed as if she were speaking into an ear open and ready to listen. She always went to God with the confidence of a child coming to a parent. Prayer was a reality to her. I had great faith in her prayers, and it gave me great strength to know that she was asking God to bless me. Her ideas of the nature of prayer were very exalted, and seemed to me correct. She thought it consisted in thanking God for blessings, and in telling Him our wants. And in what else can it consist? But she was far from selfish in her thought of it, as she was in all her religious life; for she was interested in the welfare of others, and believed in interceding in their behalf with Him who had done so much for her. She certainly did prevail with God, if we may judge from the fruits of her life. And why may we not believe that her prayers are had in remembrance before Him, and that they are among

the prayers of the saints, which were the odors in the golden vials in the hands of the elders who fell down before the Lamb?—*Rev. 5:8.*

In her home life all these qualities shone in stronger light than before the world. It is sometimes said that we need to see how one lives at home, to get a true test of Christian character. She would have stood that test. As I look back over the eight blessed years that she shone as the light of my life, I cannot find anything in her religious experience which one could wish to have different. She often said, with perfect sincerity, that if she were to live her life over, she did not know where-in she could make any very great change. This was no boasting, or assumption of anything like approach to perfection. She had no such thought as that; but it was the expression of a constant and conscientious effort to live in obedience to the will of God. It was the expression of spotless purity of thought and purpose. I do not believe she ever had a thought, purpose, or act, to conceal. She was ignorant of very many things in which young ladies now are wise, but she was wise beyond many in those things which belong to nobility of character.

10.—LOVE FOR THE CAUSE OF MISSIONS.

I think her interest in missionary work was better understood in Concord than in Cleveland. In

Concord she was one of the foremost ones in the Union Missionary Society, of which she was made a life-member by the young ladies. Twice was she elected secretary of the Woman's Board. A third election was offered her, which she felt obliged to decline. Extracts from her annual report to the society, in January, 1877, will be read with interest, as expressing her views of the vast work :

"Another year has sweetly and mercifully dawned upon us, and we stand, as it were, on its very edge, possibly too fearful on account of the errors of the past to have full confidence in ourselves in the future. As we thus reflect, the apostle's words come to us with double meaning,—'Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.' With this precious thought to inspire, shall it not be our aim in the coming year to pray more earnestly and labor more faithfully for this Missionary Society, whose interests should be very dear to all our hearts? When we read such touchingly sweet and trustful letters from the missionaries, who have left their homes of luxury to go out and labor among these poor, unenlightened women, do not our hearts go out in sympathy, and a new zeal to be up and doing? I think we all know the value of kind words. It may not ever be our privilege to speak to any of these, but it *is* our privilege to pray for them; and who shall know the value of one prayer that ascends to the Father in simple, child-like faith, believing? Tennyson says,—

'T is only noble to be good.'

Would that he had added, to *do* good."

Here follows a brief account of the year's work of the society. Then she adds,—

“Christ says, ‘to whom much is given, of him shall much be required.’ We can but feel that God has smiled His blessing upon us in allowing us to receive so much from His hand. The advantages with which His unstinted love has surrounded us ought certainly to make us more obedient to His will. God has given us a multitude of blessings in common. Besides these, He has given us blessings which are peculiar to each.

“The apostle says,—‘There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit;’ ‘differences of administration, but the same Lord;’ ‘diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.’ However, then, we may differ in our personal qualifications for Christian work, the blessings of each are abundant, and the fruit required is abundant; but all our efforts to extend God’s kingdom will result in the one end, of glorifying Him, if we are all actuated by the same spirit. As the spring unlocks the hidden calyx of the flower, and perfumes the air with its odor, and delights our senses, so may our hearts be unlocked by the divine Spirit, with a fresh consecration, to send out more freely of our works, our offerings, and our prayers.

“The work itself may seem small, the sphere in which we move unnoticed by the world; but Christ says,—‘He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much;’ and he said to the servants who had the two and five pounds, ‘Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’”

After hearing the report, the ladies tried to persuade her to let it be read at the monthly concert in the churches; but she was too distrustful of its merits to consent. The judgment of others was more just to her than she was to herself. Her retiring nature appears, from the fact that it cost her a great effort to present her report in the little company of ladies, and the strain upon her was such that she felt its effects for weeks. She shrank, like a sensitive plant, from all such prominence.

II.—HER INTEREST IN THE SALVATION OF SOULS.

Letters already quoted show how deeply she was interested in the work of the church. She gave her thought and heart to it, more than was generally known. It gave her great joy when any anxiously asked what they must do to be saved, and still greater joy when at last they came into the church. Her desire to see souls saved was such as might be expected from one as wholly given as she was to the work of the Redeemer's kingdom. There are those in Concord and in Cleveland who have been the subjects of her prayers, and if they are not saved at last, it will not be because she failed of her duty to them. Very soon after going to Concord she took a class of girls in the Sabbath-school. Before she felt obliged to give it up, her personal efforts with its members resulted in the conversion of nearly all

of them. She herself led them to Christ, by God's blessing, and they came into the church through her influence. One of the first things she thought of, on coming to Cleveland, was a prayer-meeting, by which she might reach the young girls of the church. She had it long enough to show what might reasonably be expected from it; but there were reasons why she deemed it wise not to continue it.

She never missed opportunities for urging religion upon those with whom she came in contact; and she always did it with such gentleness and grace as never to cause offence. She spent the summer of 1877 at the sea-shore. One morning a young man from Concord, who was boarding near, called at our cottage. He was inclined to be sceptical. She spent the whole morning in pointing him to the Saviour, with a straight-forward faithfulness which was like her. That very day, not three hours after he had left her, he perished in the flames of a burning building. Doubtless she was the last to urge upon him the importance of making his peace with God at once. I do not think that any soul can stand up at the last day and reproach her with known neglect of duty.

12.—SHE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH.

This simple story, which I have taken sad comfort and pleasure in writing, since the beautiful tale

has ceased telling itself here, might be lengthened indefinitely by such facts as these. Her life ended on that beautiful July morning, and yet it did not end. The words of the writer to the Hebrews come to me; and I say that she being dead yet speaks by her fragrant memory, and her beautiful life, and her counsels of wisdom and love. For these come back to me with the vividness of noon-day's light, as if Christ's words had become blessedly true of her,—namely, that whatever she said by way of advice or counsel, and whatever gracious influence she exerted, are brought to delightful remembrance. Words are too poor to tell what a wife she has been. Language has not wealth enough of expression to tell the richness of her life to me. “Her price was far above rubies.”

“Upon my troubled life
She gently shone, as shineth some fair star
Upon tempestuous waters, as this night
Upon the swellings dark of Jordan shines
The summer moon.

* * * * *

And she was my delight
And comfort for a while, a little while,
Until God called her.”*

The struggle to give her up has been a terrible one, and even yet it sometimes returns upon the soul with an almost malignant fury of crushing force.

* Ezekiel—a poem.

I cannot bless God enough that He let me have her so long—eight blessed years, on whose sky her memory leaves not a cloud. The words of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, about the poet Shelley, whom she seems to have loved intensely, come to me about Isabel :

“ But, ah ! I feel in this was given
A blessing never meant for me ;
Thou art too like a dream from heaven
For earthly love to merit thee.”

Her life was not long. Thirty-two is but at the threshold, as we are wont to reckon. But if a life is to be measured by “ deeds, not words,” if

“ That life is long which answers life’s great end,”

her life was not short. For the chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever. She did glorify God, and she has entered on the eternal enjoyment of the Divine presence. Her life was long for what she did, and the imperishable memory she has left behind her will live forever.

I do not claim for her that she excelled all other women. I do not claim that no other woman ever did her part as well. I do not claim that no other woman was greater, as the world reckons. I do not claim that she filled a place in as wide a sphere as such women as Mary Lyon, or Alice and Phebe Cary, whom she regarded with unfeigned

admiration; but that in the sphere in which she was called to walk she lived as unselfishly, and did her part as well, as woman can. And higher praise cannot be bestowed than that which Christ bestowed,—“She hath done what she could.” In this respect, as in every other, her life is worth taking as a model; and I cannot wish more or better things for the coming women, than that they may be such daughters as she was, and make as faithful, wise, loving wives. I confess I was proud of her—perhaps too fondly so. Yet I never saw her in any place which her presence did not grace. As one said of her since her death, “She could not be other than graceful.” But her grace was not put on. It was nature polished and made beautiful by the Spirit of God. It was character. At any rate, I know that I may be pardoned if I say,—for her sweet life justifies me in it,—that there can be no purer, gentler, womanlier woman, or a more Christlike Christian.

VI.

THE LAST DAYS.

It is left to tell briefly, for those who may not know it, the sad story of the last days. The heart swells to bursting, and the eyes run over with tears, as those hours of suffering are recalled which no skill availed to relieve for a single moment. From the very first her sickness was of a startlingly malignant form. So violent was it, that for six or seven weeks she could take scarcely any nourishment; the last two weeks, none at all. Through it all she was the same patient, cheerful, Christian woman, thankful for everything done for her, and looking on to the future with an eager and a delighted sense and expectancy of motherhood which was too sacred to be spoken. She talked much, as she always did freely, about dying, and heaven, and the glory of the other world—more the last days of her life. Precious and consoling is the memory of her sweet trust and fearless hope. The night before she died, when it was not thought the end was near, she said, with that triumph which God gives His saints, "I am not afraid to die."

It seemed to me during her sickness, and seems to me now as I think of it, that, if possible, she had been growing in loveliness the last months of her life. Was she not ripening for heaven?

Very early Wednesday morning, July 30, it became painfully evident that she had not strength to get through, so completely had her long and distressing sickness taken away the vitality from her naturally frail, delicate, and sensitive organism. How frail, delicate, and sensitive she was could be known by only those who were with her constantly, for her uncomplaining spirit always had a smile and a word of sympathy for others; and she has sat and listened to their woes without a word about herself, mingled her tears freely with theirs, and then gone from letting them out at the front door to lie down and rest from the severe strain which had been put upon her. She was too weak, this last morning, to talk very much, but her mind was perfectly clear. She was heard to say "My mother," as if she had said "I want to see my mother." She was asked if that was what she said, and answered Yes. Presently she said, "I do not think I shall get well;" and then, after a pause, "but I am going to a better place." After a little her face lighted with a heavenly rapture, and she said, with closed eyes, as if she were talking to one whom we did not see, "Beautiful, *beautiful* heaven." A little later I asked her if she

could recall the twenty-third Psalm. She answered that she could. I said, Can you say now "The Lord is my shepherd," &c.? "Oh! yes," was her reply. Can you leave yourself wholly with Jesus? I inquired; and again the same reply, given in accents whose sweetness can never die on my ear, "Oh! yes." She knew us all, and called us by name. In a few minutes she asked to be lifted. When we laid her back, her eye had a far-off look, as if she were looking beyond the veil. A light of glory stole over her features. Gently, calmly, and without a struggle, she fell asleep, at 7:10 o'clock, Wednesday morning, July 30. Her death was glorious in its simple beauty. It did not seem like death. There were no terrors, but triumph. A lady who was by her side when she died, said that heaven seemed real, standing by that death-bed. As we saw her lay her head down on the bosom of the Saviour she loved, we said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Her whole life was like a beautiful June morning. Her death was like the rich golden flush on the evening sky of a ripe autumnal day. She has left behind her a beautiful life. In thinking it over since it became the greater part of my own, I can find no spot to mar the beautiful coloring. She died as she had lived—peacefully, gloriously, triumphantly. Because she had lived for Christ, she died in the all-embracing arms of His

love. I was permitted to go with her from the moment her sickness began till her feet touched the cold waters of the river of death. I was permitted to close her eyes in their final sleep. I could do no more, and go no farther. I stand on the hither shore, and wait. As one of the sisters wrote me after her death, it remains for us to imitate her example of Christ-like living.

Her funeral was held at the home she loved so much, 664 Case Avenue, Thursday morning, July 31. Rev. J. E. Twitchell, D. D., of East Cleveland, conducted the sad services, and made remarks most appropriate and comforting, a brief synopsis of which appears in another place. The following hymns were sung by members of the church choir—hymns which were especial favorites with her. One was the beautiful hymn, "O PARADISE!" founded on the passage, "There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

"O Paradise! O Paradise!

Who doth not crave for rest?

Who would not seek that happy land,

Where they that loved are blest? CHORUS.

"O Paradise! O Paradise!

'Tis weary waiting here;

I long to be where Jesus is,

To feel, to see Him near.

CHORUS.

“O Paradise! O Paradise!

I greatly long to see
The special place my dearest Lord
Is destining for me.

CHORUS.

“O Paradise! O Paradise!

I feel 't will not be long:
Patience! I almost think I hear
Faint fragments of thy song.

“CHORUS. Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light,
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy light.”

The other hymn is entitled “ARE THY TOILS,”
and is founded on the passage, “Weeping may
endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morn-
ing.”

“Are thy toils and woes increasing?
Are thy foe's attacks unceasing?
Look with faith unclouded,
Gaze with eyes unshrouded,
On the Cross.

“Dost thou fear that strictest trial?
Tremblest thou at Christ's denial?
Never rest without it,
Clasp thine hands about it,
That dear Cross.

“Draw’st thou nigh to Jordan’s river?
Should’st thou tremble? Need’st thou quiver?
No! if by it lying,
No! if on it dying,
On the Cross!

“Lord and Master! if we cherish
That sweet hope, we cannot perish!
After this life’s story,
Give thou us the glory
For the Cross.”

The house was filled to overflowing with friends who came to take a last look at her lovely face, and to prove how deep and wide a hold she had got upon the people. A beautiful crown, and an anchor furnished by the Sabbath-school and by the ladies, and a great profusion of cut flowers sent in by other friends, were thoughtful and fragrant tokens of the love they bore her. She loved flowers—loved them almost passionately. How could she help it, since she and they were beautiful creations of the same hand of infinite skill! These sweet offerings of love to her precious memory were therefore peculiarly fitting.

The elders of the church acted as bearers. They bore her tenderly away from the home of which she had been the light and joy, and a great darkness settled down upon it and filled it. We took her to the train which was to bear her away on

her last journey to the home of her childhood. In our early plans for vacation, this was the week and this the train we had fixed upon to start. But, alas! such a starting was not in our thought. Truly, man proposes, but God disposes. Two elders were thoughtfully sent by the church to be their representatives at the last sad rites in the dear home at Pepperell. The train moved out of the station at 3 o'clock, and we bade adieu to a host of friends who had come to the station to do the last they could for her whom they had learned, in so brief a time, to love so well.

The services at Pepperell, in an equal manner, attested the love with which she was loved in the home of her childhood, and in the South Church in Concord. A large number of friends from Concord came to express their deep and genuine sorrow, and to represent a larger number who could not come. Profuse and beautiful floral decorations sent from New York, brought by the Concord friends, accompanying us from Cleveland, and contributed by those in Pepperell who loved her, filled the house with a fragrance which was a type of the lingering sweetness of her blessed life.

Rev. Geo. F. Swain, pastor of the church in Pepperell, into whose communion she entered when she first publicly declared herself to be one of Christ's own, conducted the services. These were made peculiarly interesting, not only by his

words of testimony to her worth of character, but also by those of Dea. C. W. Harvey, of the South Church in Concord, and of Elder H. M. James of the Woodland Avenue Church in Cleveland, who voiced the feelings of these churches, where she had been known so well as the wife of their pastor. A quartette of the young people added to the occasion by singing one of the hymns of Mr. Bliss, suggested by words which she was fond of quoting,—“We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” She loved this hymn, and often sang it with great sweetness and expression. It will ever be, with some of us, sacred to her memory, and we shall know it as her hymn :

“I know not the hour when my Lord will come
To take me away to His own dear home ;
But I know that His presence will lighten the gloom,
And that will be glory for me.

“I know not the song that the angels sing,
I know not the sound of the harps’ glad ring ;
But I know there ’ll be mention of Jesus our King,
And that will be music for me.

“I know not the form of my mansion fair,
I know not the name that I then shall bear ;
But I know that my Savior will welcome me there,
And that will be heaven for me.”

There was such a quiet simplicity and lack of formality about all the services, that we almost forgot it was a funeral. And I am not sure that it was not, to some of the hearts which bled, a season of holy joy, that God had so honored us by putting a glorious crown of life on her brow. At least, I am sure that heaven will seem nearer than ever before to some of us, and that we shall feel a certain right of possession in it, now that our Savior and hers has taken her to Himself.

A large and tearful company gathered about her last resting-place. Some kind hand had fringed the sacred spot with evergreen—sprigs from the *Arbor Vitæ*; as if Heaven itself had given us these tokens that she had now a right to the “tree of life,” among those whom John speaks of in *Revelations* 22:14, and that she had entered through the gates into the celestial city, and that she should live forever. There was no terror in that grave. As she was gently laid away in it, it lost its victory and became a hallowed spot. It did not seem as if it would be hard to lie there too. For the Master stood there with some of us, and we knew that we had left her with Him, and that in a little time He would fulfil to us, as He had to her, the promise, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” A hymn, “Jesus, lover of my soul,” &c., which she

often sang, was sung, a brief committal service was said, and all that was mortal of the loved and lovely daughter, sister, wife, was left to rest in the ground, in a living hope and belief in the resurrection, through Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." And so we came away, thinking of her, not as in the grave, but as with Christ.

Standing by the coffin of his dead brother, Robert Ingersoll said,—“Life is a narrow vale, between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; but in the night of death hope sees a star, and, listening, love can hear the rustle of a wing.” And the strong man stood there with no comfort or support in his grief and loss. Sweet little Edith, but five years old, who had never before seen the face of the dead, full of questions, as she stood gazing into the casket, could not understand about the auntie whom she had seen but two short months before in the flush and bloom of health. At last she thought out the problem in her own little head, and was satisfied, and awoke the auntie she was sleeping with to tell her solution of it. “I know

now how it is about Auntie Isabel. Her *body* is in the churchyard, but her *life* has gone to be with God." Oh! sweet and childish faith, old as the time of the preacher who said, "And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," thou hast been our only comfort and support under this blow, which has fallen with crushing weight of sorrow upon our hearts. From the lips of our dead does come back a word to our ears, and that word is the word of God, voiced by the child who solved the problem before which the proud philosopher stood baffled. Death was swallowed up in victory.

She sleeps sweetly in Jesus, in the cemetery of the beautiful town of her birth ; and her grave is under the shadows of the trees, where the moon she loved so well can look over and smile upon her resting-place, when it rises to begin its voyage through the Night. When the last trump shall break the silence of the tomb, the dead in Christ shall rise, and she shall be among them, glorious in eternal beauty. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

The following lines express my thoughts so well, I quote them here :

My stormy day. * * * * *

By my ruined home
I stand to speak for God, and stretch my hands,

* 1 Thess. 4 : 13-17.

Emptied of their sweet treasure, in God's name
To all the people. And the Lord alone
Himself doth comfort me.

And when at length
The evening-time of my long day shall come,
And God shall give me leave to lay aside
The prophet's mournful mantle for the robe
Of joy and light,—when at His Gate I find
An everlasting entrance, there my love
Shall meet me smiling. After my long day
Of storm and conflict, I shall feel once more
The joy of finding her awaiting me
At eventide, and drawing me to rest
With her in God. Then shall I hear at length
Her sweet voice singing to harps of gold,
And see her crowned with joy.†

† Ezekiel.

VII.

DR. TWITCHELL'S REMARKS AT HER FUNERAL.

Only a synopsis of the remarks of Dr. Twitchell can be given, and that cannot do them justice. What he said was largely inspired by the occasion, and was so eminently appropriate and comforting, that it is a matter of regret that we cannot have his exact words to record.

THE REMARKS.

In some respects this is no uncommon scene. With funeral services we are all familiar, yet they never lose their sadness. With all the light that plays about them, born of our blessed Christian faith, we walk in the shadows when we are bereaved; and we feel the need of an Almighty arm on which to lean.

It is the manifest order of nature for the aged to die. They grow feeble under the weight of years. They have endured, enjoyed, and wrought unto the fulfilling of their earth-mission. Infirmities have multiplied upon them; burdens have grown heavy and heavier; their strength has become

labor and sorrow. They expect to change worlds : we expect they will. Thus, with all the sense of grief, and loss, and loneliness left upon the living, we are somewhat prepared for the separation. We always begin to think and talk of rest for the aged.

It is widely different, however, when the child, or the youth, or one in the strength and vigor of early manhood or womanhood, passes from us into the spirit-world. Then it seems as if there had been some sudden reversal of law, and as if some unkind providence had interfered. At such a time no cold human philosophy can dispel the gloom ; no mere human reasoning can give radiance to the bowed and bleeding heart. Nothing short of faith in Him who sees the end from the beginning, and who has given the assurance that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, can bring comfort and peace.

If we could see things as God sees them, we should not murmur when our loved ones, who have grown God-like, take a vessel swifter bound, and reach the land of Beulah in advance of us.

We are wont to measure life by the number of the years lived on earth. God measures life by the graces of the Spirit wrought into it, and the influential forces that have gone forth from it. There are lives, of comparatively many years, of little development or use to the world. Then there are other lives, of comparatively few years, of won-

drous growth and power. We have no measure for spiritual embodiments and influences. We live, not in years, but in growths and deeds.

We are accustomed to say that one's work is done when the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl is broken. But he whose heart has been pervaded with the breath of God, leaves behind him sweet fragrance never to be wafted from the world. The hands may cease their toil, the feet to run on errands of mercy, the voice be hushed; but there are holy ministries which go on perpetuating themselves in the home, in the church, in society, through all the wide reach of undying influence. There is not a home out of which husband or wife has been borne to rest, but feels the beating of that life there, like the holy benediction of Heaven. Our friends go from us, but they remain with us. The deeds they wrought, the sacrifices they made, the words they spoke, the smiles they gave—all these are our everlasting legacy.

We talk of separations. But the two worlds are nearer together by far than most imagine. There is no dark, wide river rolling between them. Often before the lights grow dim on this hither shore, they gleam from the farther side. Often adieus are scarcely spoken before greetings are exchanged. It is parting here, reunion there. Death is but the gateway into life. The gate swings;—we say, Farewell, and hear at once the welcome.

It is not always easy to grasp these truths and rest in them. But they become real to us, and it is wonderful how grace performs its work, as the end draws on. Angels always come for the strengthening of God's own, as unto Him who tarried in Gethsemane, close on Calvary. God never leads His children, without giving them His hand; never puts them to any great test, without girding them for it by His own unseen presence and power. The waters are never permitted to overwhelm.

Such is the experience of my dear brother in this sudden, deep affliction, which came like an avalanche upon him. "The curtain has fallen on a glorious life," he said, "but there is light somewhere, and I shall see it." Yes, he *will*, he *HAS*. Such also was the experience of that pure, patient wife, whose going forth has left such desolation on this happy home, such a sense of loss on this church, where she had won her way to every heart, and on this community where the sweet influence of her godly life had begun to be felt far and wide.

The life of her whom we mourn to-day was no ordinary life. It was full of blossoms all the way through. It ended, as our eyes are able to trace it, in a halo of glory. At the age of fourteen she gave her heart to Christ, and was the instrument then of leading many others into a knowledge of His saving grace. It was under the influence of no excitement that she was led to the Savior's feet

in blessed love and faith, but under a deep conviction of duty and privilege. Her heart seemed to open like a flower of the morning, to drink in the dew and sunlight of the day.

As the years of her childhood passed she grew in the knowledge and love of God, showing a remarkable conscientiousness and loyalty to the Master. Nothing was ever allowed to come between her soul and Christ. Her opening womanhood was of rare beauty and strength of Christian character. When she came to be the wife of one of God's ambassadors, she was found rarely fitted to share with him the burdens of his blessed work. The heart of her husband trusted in her, and was never disappointed. Greater eulogy than this cannot be passed upon woman, when you cover by it the whole wide range of Christian helpfulness.

These eight years of married life have been years of joy and beauty. Encouraging her husband in times of anxiety and trial, making double the joys and hopes that came to him, moving quietly and unobtrusively among the people, avoiding all strife, entering into the pleasures and pains of others, she exerted a sweet and sanctifying influence throughout the whole circle of her connections. Coming to you, dear friends of the Woodland Avenue Church, some eighteen months ago, and taking up the duties of a pastor's wife among you, she commanded at once your completest confidence, and

won your hearts, illustrating, as she did, the wonderful grace of God to a believing, trusting soul.

This affliction is heaviest on him who must come back alone to the home here when the last offices of love have been performed, and here take up alone the labor of a great parish, no more to have the sympathy, the encouragement, the inspiration, of an affectionate, faithful, heroic wife.

But this affliction is of a public nature. One is taken from active labor on whom you, as a church and people, had hoped to lean; whose counsel you had expected to enjoy for many years; to whom you had looked to go in and out among you with her husband, fulfilling the duties of her station, aiding him as the Christian pastor's wife alone can aid him.

You will never forget her. You will never cease to cherish her precious memory. You will never escape the influence of her loving, patient, trustful, rejoicing life, and of her triumphant death. The halo of brightness which came—the crown of it all—as she was called up higher, will never depart, but will rest like a holy benediction on the home and on the church, long days to come. Such a life of precious faith and pure love is not lived in vain, and such a glorious death occurs not in vain.

There are many lessons that might be drawn from this affliction. Among them these :

FIRST. We see the silent power of a Christian heart and life. Nature works noiselessly. "The breath of spring breathes on the earth, and dissolves the icy rigors of winter, and clothes the hills and valleys with verdure." Thus divine grace works in the soul of man; often so silently as to attract little attention. Here was one walking quietly in the relation of wife, friend, and counsellor for all. Naturally timid, and shrinking from observation, she wrought on, ever cheering the heart of her husband when weary with multiplied cares; bidding him take hope when shadows of any kind began to gather; counselling him in all his work; praying for him when he wrote sermons and when he preached them; praying for you often when your eyes were closed in sleep. The ages of eternity alone will give record of what she accomplished through the influence of her Christian life, under the power of the Spirit of God.

SECONDLY. We see here the wonderful grace of God in sustaining her when it became manifest that her days were numbered. Here was one who had not reached middle life; her home attractive; her friends many; everything about her for comfort and joy that earth could give,—yet perfectly resigned to leave all for the better, more glorious joys awaiting the redeemed. It was the wonder of her heart, which she often expressed in health, that men could so grasp after and live for the

things of this world, and cling so to earth, which can never satisfy the cravings of the soul, since Christ has gone to prepare a home so much more beautiful for those who love Him. Who shall say that, as the end drew near, the veil was not lifted? God giveth His children victory. The faith of the gospel triumphs. Nothing else does.

THIRDLY. There is an added responsibility put upon this church to-day. It is left for you to take up the work she has laid down, and to illustrate in your lives the faith which made her life so beautiful and efficient.

FOURTHLY. There is now, dear brother, the possibility of illustrating the comfort of God, which you have so often assured others should be found in their afflictions.

We come here to-day sorrowing, yet rejoicing. We come with thanksgiving unto Him who giveth the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. My dear brother, the Lord bless and comfort you. The Lord gird you for grander work in His vineyard, sanctifying this and all other sorrows to the higher good of yourself and of your dear people.

After these remarks, which were prefaced by prayer offered by Rev. J. R. Mills, D. D., of the Scovill Avenue M. E. Church, Rev. Anson Smythe, D. D., offered prayer, a hymn was sung, the benediction was pronounced by Rev. H. R. Hoisington

of the North Presbyterian Church, and the large concourse of people looked for the last time upon that sweet face, which even death could not rob of its loveliness ; on which was that smile of victory over death and over everything debasing, which she had carried in her life.

VIII.

WHAT OTHERS SAID OF HER.

A husband's estimate of his wife might, naturally enough, be supposed to be colored somewhat by his love for her. A member of a family might not be considered most fitted to write an impartial sketch of another member of the same family. If anything said in the preceding pages seems to border even upon extravagance, what others said of her, when they heard of her death, who were in no way connected with her by ties of kindred, and who knew her only as the world might know any worthy life, surely cannot be charged with any show of impartiality.

I.—WHAT THE PRESS SAID OF HER.

From the *Cleveland Leader*, Thursday morning, July 31 :

DEATH OF MRS. BLAKE.

A gloom has been thrown over the Woodland Avenue Presbyterian Church, and over the entire community, by the sudden death of the estimable wife of Rev. S. L. Blake, the pastor of the church. Mrs. Blake has been a resident of this city less than

two years, but in that time she has made a multitude of ardent friends. Her gentle yet earnest Christian character, and her winning manners, have drawn to her all who have come within the circle of her acquaintance. It is not often that a death calls out so much genuine sorrow.

Mrs. Blake died yesterday morning at her residence on Case avenue, at which place services will be held at 11 o'clock to-day. The burial will take place at Pepperell, Mass., her former home, on Saturday. As Mr. Blake thus sadly starts on his vacation, he will bear with him the sympathy of his many friends.

From the Cleveland *Leader*, Friday morning, August 1:

THE LAST SAD JOURNEY.

A large number of friends gathered at the residence of Rev. S. L. Blake yesterday, at 11 A. M., to pay the last tribute of respect to a noble Christian lady, who was so suddenly taken out of a life of useful happiness. The services were short and simple. The sympathy of all was deep and touching; and all was done that friendly hands could do to lighten some portion of the heavy load so suddenly laid upon a beloved pastor and respected man. The body was removed to the depot, and taken toward its long resting-place in the old Massachusetts home.

From the Cleveland *Herald*, Thursday morning, July 31:

DEATH OF MRS. BLAKE.

We record with sorrow and sympathy the death

of the very excellent wife of Rev. S. L. Blake, pastor of the Woodland Avenue Presbyterian Church of this city. In the somewhat brief period that this lady has been known to the people of Cleveland, she has drawn around her a host of friends, not only in the church of which her husband is pastor, but wherever she has made acquaintance. A lady of rare sweetness and gentleness of character, she had greatly endeared herself to her people, both old and young. To her husband we tender our sympathy in this hour of his trouble. The funeral services will be held at the parsonage, No. 664 Case avenue, Thursday, at 11 o'clock A. M. Mr. Blake will start in the afternoon with her remains for Pepperell, Mass., her old home, where the burial will take place next Saturday.

From the Cleveland *Herald*, Friday morning, August 1 :

DUST TO DUST.—FUNERAL SERVICES OVER THE
REMAINS OF THE LATE MRS. BLAKE.

The funeral services of the late Mrs. Isabel L. Blake, wife of the Rev. S. L. Blake, pastor of the Woodland Avenue Presbyterian Church, were held at the family residence, No. 664 Case avenue, on Thursday. From necessity the exercises occurred at 11 o'clock in the morning, as the remains were to be interred at Pepperell, Mass., the old home of the deceased, and it was needful that they be sent on the afternoon train. The remains were accompanied by Mr. Blake and two elders of the church, Messrs. H. M. James and J. A. Seaton. The services were conducted by the Rev. J. E. Twitchell,

assisted by the Revs. J. M. Mills, Anson Smythe, and H. R. Hoisington. The singing was led by Mr. Alfred Arthur, who was assisted by Misses T. Fuller and S. Seelye, Mrs. B. S. Barrett, S. Rogers, Miss J. Whittemore, and Messrs. N. D. Pratt, D. E. Wright, and F. M. Sanderson. After singing, and a short prayer by Rev. Mr. Mills, the Rev. Mr. Twitchell read a few passages of scripture appropriate to the occasion, and spoke at some length. He was followed in prayer by the Rev. Anson Smythe, after which the choir again sang, and the benediction was pronounced by the Rev. H. R. Hoisington. At the conclusion of the services all were given an opportunity to view the remains, which had been placed in an elegant metallic casket. The flowers that had been provided for the occasion were profuse and elegant, two designs having been presented by the church and Sabbath-school. The pall-bearers were J. A. Seaton, H. M. James, J. T. Sencebaugh, John Buchan, William Taylor, and J. J. Davis.

Mrs. Blake's death was quite unexpected, she having been seriously ill but a few days; in fact, she was not considered in danger until the day before her death. She made many friends while here, who feel her loss keenly.

From *The Congregationalist* (Boston, Mass.) of August 6:

The many friends of Rev. S. L. Blake, pastor of the Woodland Avenue Presbyterian Church in Cleveland, will regret to learn of the death of his wife, who by her sweetness and gentleness of character had greatly endeared herself to her people,

and to a large circle of friends outside his church. After the funeral services at Mr. Blake's residence, July 31, the body was taken east, to Pepperell, Mass., Mrs. Blake's former home, where it was interred August 2.

Letter of Rev. Anson Smythe, D. D., in the *N. Y. Evangelist* of August 7:

This afternoon my dear brother Blake will leave on his vacation, accompanied by a committee of his church, bearing with them the remains of Mrs. Blake, who yesterday passed into the heavens.

Mrs. Blake was a native of Pepperell, Mass., where her husband had his first settlement in the ministry. Less than two years ago Mr. Blake was called from Concord, N. H., to take charge of our Woodland Avenue Church, in which position his labors have been remarkably blessed. Mrs. Blake very soon secured the confidence and affection of all whose acquaintance she made. She was a lady of rare natural gifts and high culture. To an unusually pleasing presence, to social qualities which rendered her society attractive, and to a mind thoroughly disciplined, she added deep consecration of heart to the service of the Master. It seemed to us that she could not be spared from her walks in life; but God's thoughts were not like ours, and at the age of thirty-two years she left us for the better land. Her funeral services were attended this morning, and were conducted by the Rev. Dr. Twitchell, assisted by your correspondent. A multitude of people manifested a sense of deep personal loss, and while life remains not one of us

all will forget the beautiful and saintly lady that the Lord gave and has taken from us.

The sympathies of thousands will follow Mr. Blake during the weeks of his absence, and when he shall return we shall not cease to remember his bereavement, for we are all bereaved.

From the Boston (Mass.) *Daily Journal*:

The death of Mrs. Isabel Lawrence Blake, a lovely and excellent woman, caused the deepest sorrow to the hearts of all who knew her. She was the wife of Rev. S. L. Blake, who was for several years pastor of the South Church in Concord, N. H., but is now located in Cleveland, Ohio. Mrs. Blake was eminently fitted by nature and by goodness for her place in life, and with intellectual ability she united the purest and most beautiful graces of Christian character. Before marriage she was Miss Lawrence, of Pepperell, Mass., where her remains were taken for burial. Though death has claimed her, yet the fragrance of her pure life will long linger in the hearts of all who had been associated with her.

From the Concord (N. H.) *Daily Monitor* of Monday, August 4:

DEATH OF MRS. S. L. BLAKE.

The blow that fell upon this community on Wednesday, July 30, on learning of the sudden death of Mrs. Isabel Lawrence Blake, at Cleveland, Ohio, was one of great severity to all who knew and loved her, and from which they will not soon recover. During the six years of her life

which were passed in this city, she won her way into every heart by her unvarying gentleness; and she has left behind her the tenderest of memories, unmixed with anything which can cause pain, except the shadow which comes over us as we realize that we shall see her face no more till we "meet beyond the river," where partings are unknown. She was eminently fitted by nature and by grace for her place in life, and in her were united strength of mind, with sweetness, rare intellectual culture, and an earnest Christian character. The longest lives are not always measured by the greatest number of years; and though so early called, though her friends would so gladly have detained her here, yet her work was finished, and she was needed in the heavenly home.

Services were held on Thursday morning at her late residence in Cleveland, conducted by Rev. Dr. Twitchell, at which friends filled the house to overflowing, and loving tribute was paid to her memory. The loved remains were then taken to her former home in Pepperell, Mass., where friends from far and near were gathered, not to welcome her, as they had fondly hoped, but to mourn her early death, and bear her to the portals of the Silent Land. The services were brief and interesting, conducted by the pastor of the church in Pepperell. Suitable remarks were added by an officer of the church in Cleveland, and a member of the South Church in this city. Many friends from Concord were present with tributes of flowers, and nothing was omitted which could impart comfort on so mournful an occasion. The fragrance of such a life will remain, and its memory be measured only by eternity.

From the *Herald Presbyterian* (Cincinnati, O.)
of September 24 :

We regret to learn that Rev. S. L. Blake, pastor of the Woodland Avenue Presbyterian Church, Cleveland, Ohio, suffered the loss of his wife during the last week of July. She was a woman of rare qualities, having been converted at the age of fourteen years, and grew up developing a beautiful Christian character; and although she had been in Cleveland but a brief period, she was beloved by all, and will be greatly missed in the church.

At the meeting of the pastors of Cleveland, held in the chapel of the Y. M. C. A., on Monday morning, September 15, 1879, the following preamble and resolutions, presented by Rev. Anson Smythe, D. D., and seconded by the Rev. James R. Mills, D. D., were unanimously adopted :

Whereas, since our last meeting, it has pleased God to take to her heavenly home the beloved wife of our dear brother, Rev. S. Leroy Blake, pastor of the Woodland Avenue Presbyterian Church,—

Resolved, That we lament her early death, and shall bear in lasting memory her high and beautiful qualities as a Christian woman, and the dignity, grace, and fidelity with which she discharged the appropriate duties of a pastor's wife.

Resolved, That we assure our bereaved Brother Blake of our condolence and sympathy in his deep affliction, and we pledge him our prayers that God may sustain him in this time of sorrow, and cause

his great loss to contribute to his spiritual welfare and ministerial usefulness.

O. D. PATCH, *Moderator.*

O. D. FISHER, *Secretary.*

2.—WHAT FRIENDS SAID OF HER IN LETTERS OF COMFORT AND CONDOLENCE, WHICH WERE RECEIVED AFTER HER DEATH.

It is fitting that they should speak first who knew her longest as a pastor's wife. The following letters and extracts from letters from friends in Concord only voice the universal feeling of regard for her, and the deep sorrow which the news of her death caused. This feeling was not confined to those who were her church friends, but all who knew her shared it, without respect to creed or station. Even those who might naturally be supposed to be least affected, expressed their sorrow in the most emphatic and sympathizing way. Said a lady, If I could be remembered as Mrs. Blake is, I should be satisfied.

CONCORD, N. H., July 31, 1879.

Dear Mr. Blake:—Your telegram, which came to hand at 12½ P. M. yesterday, has caused a shock to this whole city that no such news has ever created before. It seemed to me, as I read the message over and over again, that there *must be* some mistake; and as I went out to carry the sad news to some that loved the dear woman as their own selves, I seemed to be in a sort of maze.

But, my dear sir, I dare not write to you a single

word: no one can describe the sympathy which is expressed for yourself, nor the sorrow which is in every heart. It seems as though all had lost their dearest friend. For myself and family, no one outside was dearer.

As you are aware, Mrs. H. and myself know something of sudden bereavement, but *nothing* of yours. We have only to remind you that the beloved Master once prayed that the bitter cup, which He was called to partake, might pass from Him. But he said, "Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done." And then we are told that angels came and ministered unto Him; and I know that none but the loving Father's messengers can minister to you.

Yours, with all my heart's sympathy,

C. W. H.

The above is from the family with whom we made our first home in Concord, on beginning our married life there. Following are letters and extracts from letters from a few of the young ladies, which speak the universal testimony. If here were to be added extracts from letters received in her lifetime from the same writers, and many more, a deeper meaning would be given to their expressions of the sorrow which her death caused.

CONCORD, N. H., Aug. 1, 1879.

My Dear Mr. Blake:—I can't find words to express my feelings for you, in this your great trouble. It seems all a dream to me. I can't realize anything about it. It runs through my mind all the time,—“She was ready, she was ready.”

It is a great sorrow to me not to be able to see her dear face once more here on earth ; but my friends have convinced me that it is not right for me to go to Pepperell at this time. Be sure my thoughts will be with you all the day long, and I pray God will give you the comfort no earthly friend can.

Your friend,

L. W. M.

This is the lady of whom another wrote to Isabel, soon after our leaving Concord,—“ It is harder for L—— M—— to be reconciled than any one I know of. It is only since you went away that I have realized how much she saw you, and depended on you for enjoyment every day.”

The following is from one of the family in which I found a home before she came to be part of my life :

CONCORD, N. H., Aug. 2, 1879.

My Dear Mr. Blake:—Never were we more saddened at the death of any one outside our own family circle than at the death of your own dear wife ; and she seemed like one of us, so dear was she to us all.

I could scarcely believe Dea. H.'s words when he called at the door the other day and told me of her death, and I can scarcely realize that she, whom I, and all of us, loved so much, is no more.
* * * You can scarcely conceive of the sympathy that has been going out towards you from your old people here, and from many that were not of them. In prayer-meeting, last evening, Mr. S. had charge, and read that chapter on fruit-

bearing, alluding to the verse, "So shall ye be my disciples." That is, fruit-bearing is an evidence of discipleship. And then, with deepest feeling, he alluded to the lovely life of Mrs. Blake, as one so fruitful of loving deeds and words, and, in its sweetness and humility, such an evidence of that true spirit of piety which Christ would have us all cultivate, if we would be really and truly His. As he spoke, the hearts of all were stirred, and many were the tears that fell, as the thought of her, who was once of us, came back to us so forcibly.

With deepest sympathy,

L. V. P.

Another of this circle of young ladies wrote,—
"It is a privilege to have been one of her friends. I am sure I feel like joining in your prayers that her sweet influence may not be lost upon us. Heaven does seem nearer as those that we love are gathered there." A week later, the same pen wrote,—
"I always loved her from the first moment I saw her. I do not believe there is any one outside her own family who feels her death as much as I do." This young lady was with us during part of those last weeks.

The following, from still another, like the rest, tells its own tale of sorrow and love :

CONCORD, Aug. 19, 1879.

My Dear Mr. Blake:—All this past week, since I came from the country, I have felt that I must write just a few words to you, and yet I have hesitated to break in upon your sorrow, even by a

letter of sympathy. If you could know all the tender things people here have said and thought of you, I am sure it would be as comforting to you as any earthly consolation could be. My heart is so full of dear Mrs. Blake, that when I try to make any expression of it, words seem utterly to fail me. But I thank God many times every day that I have the blessing of her precious memory. She was so gracious and winning in all her ways, so sympathetic and lovable, that she was and is an inspiration to me. I shall never forget the one happy, quiet day that I spent with her four years ago, in her own home; and I have been thinking a great deal, in these past three weeks, how, in all your grief at having her away from you, you must rejoice in the blessed eight years you were allowed to spend together.

She wrote me the sweetest, kindest letter last winter,* and now I feel that I have a little of herself that is all my own, and it is a very dear possession. * * *

It is very easy for me to conceive of dear Mrs. Blake as at *home* in heaven, she seemed so fitted for an abundant entrance there while she was with us; and I can hardly think what there was of the earthly about her that would have to be put off. A hundred times I am sure I must have said, that she was, to me, the nearest to perfection of any woman I ever knew. But I must not go on with the many things that are continually in my thought of her.

I am sure you know that you have our most earnest prayers that you may be sustained by the

* See page 41.

only power that can sustain, and that when flesh and blood cry out for flesh and blood, you may receive only the greater spiritual blessing. * *

With warmest sympathy and love from both
A—— and myself, I am

Your sincere friend,

M. P. W.

The following letter was from a lady who, as the letter intimates, was herself on a bed of sickness, and looking forward to the time as possibly not far off when she, too, would be called home :

CONCORD, Aug. 2, 1879.

Dear Mr. Blake:—Lying here upon my couch, hardly able to walk across my room alone, my heart aches for you in your great, deep sorrow, which is a sorrow to us all. The tears will not be repressed, and my eyes are dim with them as I write, when I think I shall never see dear Mrs. Blake again upon earth. I think, though, it may not be long before I shall meet her “just across the river.” I always thought her like a lily, grown up tall and slender, and crowned with a bloom of purity and sweetness. I was just speaking to a friend of her loveliness, when the sad, sad tidings of her death came to me. I was grief-stricken, and thought it must be a mistake — that it *could not be so*.

God never makes mistakes, and what seems a mysterious providence to us *must* be right, because He has done it. Now she blooms in the garden above ; now she is more than ever angelic.

“None knew her but to love her,
None named her but to praise.”

I shall never forget her sweet face, and her pleasant smile, and her gentleness. I shall gaze often at her picture, and I hope that before I depart to go hence and be here no more forever, I may grow to be more and more like her in Christian life and character. * * *

Your sympathizing and sincere friend,

S. W. S.

One of the young men writes,—“The news throws a gloom over hosts of friends, who had learned to love and admire Mrs. Blake’s rare qualities of character;—a true Christian, everybody’s friend.” •

The following letter is from Mrs. B. P. Stone, whose husband was for a long time one of the prominent clergymen of New Hampshire, and who was himself also, on his mother’s side, a descendant of the family of John Lawrence. The prayer-meeting alluded to was the Ladies’ prayer-meeting, at which Isabel was usually present, and which she often led. Mrs. Stone writes, under date of August 1, 1879,—

Dear Sir: I shall not attempt to assuage your grief under the heavy affliction. The heart must bleed. “Jesus wept.” But a pleasant memory of your dear wife came to me very soon. At one of the little prayer-meetings at my house, the subject under consideration was the necessity of affliction, and how surely our Heavenly Father will send the needed discipline. We were all so much older than Mrs. Blake, that I presume our views were somewhat more sombre than hers. She was deeply

interested, even to tears; and she asked, "Why should not the *goodness* of God lead us to the attainment of right character without the need of severity?" We comforted her at once, and told her that in her case at least, for years very likely, she might be led by the gentle hand of the Savior "into green pastures and beside the still waters." And now it is so clear that her discipline is all over.' Very gently has she been led her life long; and now in the heavenly mansions she will work and wait till you come.

I had a beautiful little dream about her. I thought she had been sick, nigh unto death. I called to see her, not knowing that I could, but she signified that she would like to see me. As I entered the room, she put out her hand, and gave me so sweet a smile, that it lingers in my memory yet. And I doubt not that in the bright hereafter I shall realize more that the dream. Oh! the dead are alive and happy, and very full of the sweet service of the Redeemer.

May the dear Lord sustain you.

Rev. F. D. Ayer, of the North Church in Concord, wrote,—

There were very few who held a deeper, quieter love for your dear wife than did the true heart that still brightens my home. M—— so often used to say, "O that I could see Mrs. Blake for a while!" and we had talked, and tried to plan so that should you be at Concord we might be at home. There were few of her own kin whom M—— oftener spoke of than of Mrs. Blake. * * You know how the children loved her, whom all loved who knew her. How many there are to

whom the tidings were sad indeed. But, dear brother, how much heavier the blow to the home whose light has gone out, and in which the hope of years to come is crushed! Be assured, in the love of many hearts you have also the prayers of hundreds united, that the faith fail not, and that the eye be clear to look beyond the clouds. How strange these broken plans, these half finished (as it seems to us) lives! We shall see the other side by and by, and my prayer shall be that you and all of us may live the more under that thought, and that, though sad and in sorrow, we may yet be in precious hope and anticipation.

These letters show how hard it was, for those who had known and loved her in Concord, to give her up; how they dwelt upon her memory and cherished thoughts of her; how constantly her name was upon their tongues, as a dear household word; how they waited almost impatiently, and looked forward eagerly, for the time when they might possibly have a brief space in which to enjoy her sweet presence. They depended on seeing her in Concord every summer, and got a willing promise from her that she would gratify their wish. I believe the people in Concord would almost have laid down their lives for her, they loved her so much. It cannot be wondered that she was happy in such love, and that it cost her a great struggle to break away from it.

Rev. J. F. Lovering, who was pastor of the

Unitarian Church in Concord during a portion of our life there, writes from Watertown, Mass. :

My Dear Mr. Blake:—Last Friday I received a copy of the Concord (N. H.) *Statesman*, in which reference was made to the sad bereavement which has befallen you under God's providence.

* * * I beg you will let me send just a few lines, simply to tell you how much I sympathize with you in your sorrow.

I recall so vividly the sweet womanliness and graceful courtesy of your wife. I remember her ready sympathy with those who came into ordinary social contact with her. I remember how eager she was to be your helpmate indeed, not in the beautiful and blooming home-life you enjoyed, but in your church relations. I remember so many trivial instances of your careful consideration for her,—so trivial that you have forgot them, but which indicated so much to others,—that I can somewhat understand how heavy your affliction must be. * * *

The Lord bless you. The Lord lift upon you the light of His countenance. The Lord be with you day and night, with the love that passeth all understanding.

A little later, the same brother wrote,—

Do you remember delivering a lecture in Eagle hall, at Concord, on Hugh Miller? At the close of your lecture I met your wife for the first time. There was sunshine in her smile. The glow of it has lasted all through the years since; and as I thought of you in your sorrow, and tried to understand in some poor way how great your loss must

be, I recalled that evening, and saw again the face that has smiled into your life with such sweet and tender love.

The next letter is from a lady who was once a member of the South Church in Concord, whose life was suddenly made desolate by the death of a fond and devoted husband, and to whom Isabel endeared herself very much by her sweet sympathy.

NEWTON, MASS., Sept. 14, 1879.

My Kind Pastor:—The sad news has just reached me, and I am shocked—too much so to write you anything that can comfort you in such loneliness. Such a sweet, pure, and gentle life has left behind it so many that mourn with you, who was her dearest and loving companion. Your grief is too sacred to be intruded upon, but I want to send you the sympathy that comes from a heart wounded as yours has been, while I mourn for her who was so tender and kind to me in the years of perfect desolation. Can it be I shall never see her beautiful face again, and the last word of advice from her sweet lips has been said to me?

She promised last year she would visit me this, and it was but lately I wondered how soon her letter would reach me, telling me when to look for her. But no. The happy drive last year was the last sweet time, with your beautiful wife, for me. I hope some time to meet her in God's beautiful home above, where she is a lovely angel. Are they all as pure? * * *

Would that this could comfort you; but words

are useless at such a time. My tears mingle with these words, and I *cannot realize it*.

Accept much sympathy from your friend,

A. B. W.

The following letters from friends in Cleveland show how deep a hold she had got upon the hearts of the people during her brief, unselfish life in their midst. A young lady writes,—

I do not know how to express my sympathy for you in your loss, for I cannot understand what it would be to lose such an earthly and dear friend; but I wanted you to know how much I loved her.

Another writes,—

Her death was a shock to the church and whole community. All loved her for her gentleness, and for her pure, lovely, Christian character. We shall ever remember her many virtues, and never cease to emulate her noble example.

Still another writes,—

Your wife had won a warm place in the hearts of the people here by her beautiful character. She was one among a thousand. Rarely have I met one who was in every way so qualified in head and heart for the place she so well filled. We all mourn with you. We feel as if we had all suffered a great loss.

Another pays this tribute to her worthy memory :

A great many people here sympathize with you in the loss of Mrs. Blake. I have never seen Mrs. J—— mourn so sincerely before. We talk of her

more than anything else. I did not know how much we all loved her. And we are not alone. It is the common theme in the church, and the sorrow is deep and genuine.

At another time the same writes,—

All express so much sorrow for what, far more than I expected, is regarded as our common loss.

As showing that her life and death have already borne fruit here, the same person writes,—

Our G——, in her reserved way, has been pondering for a long time, I find, the question of her duty in the matter of presenting herself to the session. She has somehow associated Mrs. Blake's death with her duty, and of her own accord has introduced the subject to her mother and me.

The same writes in the *Woodland Recorder*, of December 13,—a paper published by the Woodland Avenue Church,—

No event in the history of the Woodland Avenue Church has ever called out so tender a sorrow as the death of this beloved woman. She had not lived long in our midst, and her health was such that she had not made a wide acquaintance; but we shall not soon forget what a gloom overspread the entire community on that July morning, when the sad tidings were announced that her spirit had passed away. Not only those who had come to know her intimately, but those who were only slightly acquainted with her, even outside of our own congregation, seemed to feel that to some extent this was their own personal loss.

Mrs. Blake was, indeed, a woman of rare excellence of mind and character. The keenness of her insight, the accuracy of her judgment, and the delicacy of her appreciation, were of rare quality; but in sweetness and gentleness of soul, sympathy with those in trouble, and in piety that knew no limit in its devotion, her equal is seldom seen. Her faculty for making friends was truly wonderful. In Concord, as in Cleveland, as well as in her early home in Pepperell, her friends were always far more numerous than her acquaintances. Everybody loved her; and no wonder, for she loved everybody. At her death three parishes were in mourning. Though a person of strong and decided convictions, she was so charitable and considerate of others that she was never known to censure any one. Even when she felt that her dearest interests had been violated (and such an organization as hers could feel an injustice most keenly), through her tears she never failed to offer an excuse or a word of apology for those who had caused her pain.

To her the religion of Jesus Christ was all in all. To very few persons are spiritual things so much a reality as they were to her. Her Savior was as much a real presence as were her earthly friends; heaven as much a real existence as her Concord home; and she looked forward to the future life as she did to any other event, the realization of which might come very soon. One of her favorite hymns was that beginning,—

“ I know not the hour when my Lord shall come
To take me away to His own dear home;
But I know that His presence will lighten the gloom,
And that will be glory for me.”

To any who ever heard her sing this hymn with so much feeling, it must always seem especially sacred. It expressed her sincerest thought.

Aside from the trial of parting from friends, death had no terror to her; indeed, she looked forward to it as a joyful occasion. Her departure was as serene and beautiful as her life. In her last moments she seemed to have a glimpse of the glories of the other side. After an interval of seemingly partial unconsciousness, her countenance lighted up as with an ineffable joy, as she whispered,—“Oh, beautiful! beautiful!” With these words she passed into the beautiful city, into the company of the heavenly choir of redeemed ones that sing around the throne, into the presence of that dear Lord whom she knew and loved so well.

Mrs. Blake's life was not a long one, if we count by years; but few lives have accomplished more. Her death is unquestionably the greatest loss this church has ever had to mourn. Her influence can never be lost, and her memory will be cherished among us as long as any of us shall live.

Another writes,—

The blessed promises of Him who gave, and has taken away, are all yours, together with the assurance, He doeth all things well, and that what you know not now, you shall know hereafter. You shall know why the dear face you loved so well has faded from mortal vision, why the gentle voice is hushed, and the kind hands are folded in unbroken rest. Even in the darkness which now overshadows you, you will discern that life has other kinds of completeness besides length of days, and that there are lives so rounded and crowned

by their completed deeds of love, that death seems to have appeared in the fulness of their prime, only to consecrate them forever.

When we were travelling in 1876, we had letters of introduction to a Liverpool merchant, who invited us to dine with himself and family, and who showed us such true hospitality that Isabel never ceased to speak of it. That English family made a lasting and delightful impression upon her. The gentleman, writing to one of the family after her death, says,—

I so well remember Mrs. Blake, and although she and her husband spent but a few hours at our home, she left a very marked impression upon us all, and my wife has often spoken of the visit of “that most delightful American lady.” I am sure that by those who knew her she must have been very dearly loved.”

Who, after all, is better competent to speak of her than one who knew her all her life? So I add here the words of the oldest sister: “I love to think of her. Her life is a big history to me. I am trying to study it to make my own better. She was so loving, so gentle, so good. I never did hear any one spoken of so much, every one expressing the same beautiful things about her. We know it all. But best of all, she was such a true, faithful Christian.” Another of the sisters writes,—“It seems as if she grew nearer and dearer to me each day.” Another of them writes,—“It seems

so strange to think that dear Isabel is to be with us no more. I trust the spirit of meekness and gentleness which she always manifested will descend upon us. Her memory will always be sweet and precious."

The only other letter I will add is from Prof. Mead, of Oberlin, written from Andover, Mass., August 9, 1879:

My Dear L.:—I cannot tell you how much we were shocked and saddened by the intelligence in this week's *Congregationalist*. I cannot say a word that will help you bear this heavy burden, but I must assure you of my deep sympathy, and must speak my very high appreciation and admiration of your beautiful wife, even though the more you are reminded of this, the more are you made to feel the irreparable loss which you sustain in parting with her. There was in her such delicacy of feeling, such purity and loftiness of motive, such sweetness combined with courage, such affectionateness combined with force of will! It seemed to us that you had in her just such a wife as you wanted, and that she was to you the greatest blessing God could grant. No doubt such she has been, and in the memory of the years of blessed companionship, such she will still be. God comfort you, dear L——, in your loneliness! This is all I can say! My wife joins in tenderest sympathy, and mourns the loss of one whom she valued as one of her best friends.

Ever yours faithfully,

H. MEAD.

If all that has been said to me in praise of her lovely character could be added, the testimony to her worth, from every quarter, would swell to a volume. It does not seem that more could be said of a woman than has been said of her, and it does not seem that a death could create a wider or a profounder impression. The spontaneity of all this testimony gives it peculiar force. It is simply the outgushing of hearts which speak what they feel, and because they feel. The secret of it all is found in her unaffected purity of soul, her integrity of purpose, and her self-forgetful sympathy. Surely the testimony of these notices and of these letters must relieve the husband and friends of all partiality in their estimate of her loveliness. For if there is any extravagance of language, it is to be found in these expressions of love from those who were bound to her only by ties of unfeigned admiration for her sterling qualities of mind and heart.

IX.

CONCLUSION.'

This is the simple story of her life. It is like a sweet song singing itself. As another said, who wrote a like memorial,—“Often have I turned aside from my work to brush away the falling tears, and to calm the feelings that have choked my utterance even with the pen.” Our sore hearts have often asked, Why was this? Why could she not have been spared to the life of usefulness which seemed to stretch invitingly before her?—to her friends, who seemed to need her so much, and who loved her so fondly? Why were the hands, which would have kept her here a little longer, so bereft of all power? I have ceased to ask such questions, for no answer comes back. Bryant wrote,—

“Loveliest of lovely things are they
On earth that soonest pass away.
The rose that lives its little hour
Is prized beyond the sculptured flower.”

Another poet wrote,—

“Death loves a shining mark, a signal blow.”

Certainly this mark was shining, and the blow was signal. But still the unanswered question, Why?

One of the most fathomless mysteries is the mystery of sorrow. Buds of promise are plucked, and blighted fruit is left to hang uselessly on withered branches. We cannot understand this way of doing. Only a faith which can say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him," can wait to know God's reasons. Doubtless in this, as in all else, His ways are not as our ways. Doubtless such sorrow, as Charles Kingsley said, when waiting on what proved to be his own dying bed, for the daily expected death of his wife,—“It must be right; for it is so strange, and yet so painful.” Doubtless, as Prof. Phelps, of Andover, says,—“The very mysteriousness of inexplicable trial is a token of the Divine wisdom from which it comes. No other mind could contrive trial so profound.” But, admitting all this, we come back at last to our starting-point without answer to our question. God sometimes seems prodigal of the lives he has trained for best service, and to act on an unequal principle.

But there may be another side for us. It is not improbable that, at thirty, some have done more than others who live to three-score years and ten. So their work is sooner done, and they are sooner ready to be called in from the toilsome fields. Possibly those who die early are the best scholars in

Divine grace, and are soonest ready for promotion. The history of Christian experience is not without what may be called precociousness of character. We have seen young Christians who had the zeal and consecration of age. McCheyne did not live to be an old man. Yet few who reach three-score years and ten do as much for the Master as did this eloquent preacher, who was cut off in mid-summer. Frederick W. Robertson died at the early age of thirty-six. The ten short years of his ministry were packed with results. No public life was ever shorter than Christ's; no public life was ever fuller of results.

The whole secret of what we call prematureness of Christian character, is simply intense consecration. We measure life by years; but this does not tell half the truth. The true measurement of life is results. Isabel had but eight years of public womanhood. But somehow she has left a stamp which time will not erase. The years of her life were fruitful for eternity.

It may be that some die early, because they need less discipline than others to fit them for the great change. They may have been faithful over the few things committed to their charge, and were sooner ready than the rest of us to enter into the joy of their Lord. I do not mean that they had less capacity to do, but that for some reason God did not see it necessary to put so much upon them.

Delicate, sensitive natures do not need the rough-and-tumble of life to develop their Christian graces. They become sanctified without. And so He who would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, spares them such severe discipline.

It may also be true, that those who are called early to come up higher develop some striking fitness for work which God may require to have done in His kingdom above. He may have some special service waiting for them. So it may be that a life which seemed cut short in its usefulness is working on in a sphere of whose importance we may have no conception. The time, talents, energies, preparation, which seem wasted, may not have been intended, in God's plan, for long service in this scene of conflicts. He may have meant all the time, by this disciplinary training, some employment in the other world. So what may seem to us a prodigal waste, is but utilizing the forces He had been preparing.

The view of the Bible is, that God honors those whom He calls to help swell the throng around the throne. Although the flesh bleeds when it is wounded, and the sorrow-riven heart cannot keep back its anguish, yet if we could see as God sees, I have no doubt we should see that it is a more momentous thing to live, than, for one who is ready, to die. For His word says, "Blessed are

the dead who die in the Lord." It takes a masterful faith to compass this sublime thought. We are not accustomed to hold this view,—that death is, or can be, a blessing; that the early death of the righteous is a signal mark of Divine favor,—because we look from the stand-point of the living—of personal sorrow. But if we could understand this, "that they may rest from their labors," I think the whole point of view would be changed, and we should be able to see what blessings the redeemed enter upon when they die. By and by we shall be able to see it so. I think she did, with that peculiarly clear vision of faith which was given her in those last days. For she said,—
"Death does not seem dreadful to me. I think I could hear of the death of any of my friends, and not shed a tear. Why do we cling to them so, and try to keep them here, when it is so much more glorious and blessed in heaven?" In a volume of Familiar Quotations I have found this, from Longfellow, marked with her pencil, as if it expressed her thought:

"There is no Death! What seems so is transition;
This life of mortal breath
Is but the suburb of the life elysian,
Whose portal we call Death."

Perhaps the purposes of God are accomplished, in those who are called home in the ruddy flush of

young life, before the rude touch of the world has been laid upon them, by gentler processes ; just as the sweetest flowers are often not those which have grown rugged under the fierce blasts, but which have grown sweet and beautiful by the tender care they had in your conservatory. Some natures need rough treatment. Others, like the flowers, open themselves to the sun-light of God's love. They were not meant for earth. Their feet touch here, in their flight to the celestial world, just long enough to shed God's benediction, and then hasten to obey the Father's hand which bids them come to Him.

Another reason why God takes those who seem specially ripened for heaven may be to gratify some personal desire. I love to think that God enjoys the companionship of souls which have His likeness, and that it is a matter of personal gratification to Him to have them near Him. Does not this agree with Christ's promise,—“I go to prepare a place for you ; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also” ? Is not the death of those whose lives have fitted them for this honor an answer to Christ's prayer,—“Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me” ? This implies a personal desire, on our Savior's part, that those who love Him should be with Him.

I love to think, also, that God admires real beauty, and therefore takes to Himself some of the rarest fruits of His renewing grace before we are ready to give them up. He likes jewels as well as we, and wants them to set in His diadem of glory. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." We do not select from the bush the rose which has outlived its beauty and its fragrance, and is fast falling to decay: we pick the freshest, sweetest, fairest flower we can. May not God, in a far higher sense than we can, act on such a principle? God wants the best, and why should He not have it? If our friends are torn from us too soon, we may take comfort from the thought that Jesus wanted them, and that it was infinite condescension in Him to deny Himself so long the pleasure of their companionship in the Father's house, that we might have them to ourselves.

I cannot look behind the curtain which hides the purposes of God. But when my heart cries out within me, Why could He not have let the light of my life shine upon me, with its sweet smiles of hope and cheer, a little longer? I take refuge in the thought that she was ripe for heaven, and God wanted her. I say, as one who for more than thirty years has lain on her bed of pain said of her, "She was too ripe for heaven to stay"; and I try to be submissive to that deeper, mysterious plan,

whose execution has changed and set aside all the plans and hopes of my life.

I have found comfort, also, in the thought, that in their death God gives His children an opportunity to testify for Christ, such as life could not afford them. Trial is the test of faith. Many a child of God has come to the hour of death with very little philosophy, but a great deal of trust. If you go to Quebec, and visit the Plains of Abraham, you will be shown the spot where Wolfe fell. You will be told that, as he was dying, they brought him the news that the French were flying; and that his eye lighted for a moment, as he exclaimed,—“Now, God be praised! I die happy.” Stand on another field of conflict, at the bed-side of the young disciple who has overcome, and is about to receive the crown of life and enter on the inheritance of all things. See the light of glory steal over the features. See that far-off look in the eye, as if it were looking beyond the veil. You have beheld a triumph which cannot be won on any field of earthly strife. You have seen faith tried by its severest test without failing. Men may argue as they will, but they cannot argue down such testimony. Many a man, witnessing such triumph, has exclaimed within himself,—“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” The testimony of Isabel’s death to the power of faith was such as to strike the tongue

of cavil dumb. No one could have witnessed her last hours on earth, and doubted for a moment that Christ was present in her heart to sustain her. I have felt that, by calling her so triumphantly home, God underscored the testimony of her life, and gave it a prominence and force which her quiet, retiring nature would have shrunk from. Already her life and death have borne fruits. It cannot be that the harvest is all gathered.

Another thought has brought me great comfort. It may be that God takes away those whose choice virtues and loveliness have bound them to us as with cords which cannot be broken, to create in us who remain a deeper and more personal interest in heaven. I do not think it wrong to say that heaven seems nearer and dearer since she has gone there. The cord drawing us thither is stronger now—stronger than any which bind us to earth. Our treasures are multiplying on the other side: why should not our heart's best affections be there also?

Those who have crossed the flood will soon be more than those who remain. It will not be long before our friends will all be there. The prophets and patriarchs, the saints and apostles, the redeemed who have been called home out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue,—more than all else, our elder brother, Jesus Christ,—are there now. What a glorious company this,

made doubly attractive to us by the presence of that sweet spirit which so long smiled upon our lives with its blessed light! Can it be wondered that such personal presence, in the Father's house, has such an attractive power to us that we sometimes feel like Paul, and can hardly wait, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better!

I cannot think of her as dead. Her death did not seem like dying. It was not. It was entering into life. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "He that hath the Son hath life." "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." She had that life. That life cannot sleep; it cannot die. She is alive, and with God. He "is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

"Oh! call it not death! 't is life begun,
For the waters are passed, and home is won;
The ransomed spirit has reached the shore
Where they weep and suffer and sin no more.

"She is safe in her Father's house above,
In the place prepared by her Savior's love.
To depart from the world of sin and strife,
And to be with Jesus—yes, this is life."

So I think of her as rejoicing in the presence of her Savior, and of her death as going home. I can-

not think of her as lying in the grave. For I am as certain as I can be of anything, that, when the gates of pearl swung back to let her in upon the pavement of pure transparent gold, the Master himself greeted her with a smile and a personal welcome, and with His own hands placed upon her brow a beauteous crown of victory. *Rev. 2 : 10.* It comforts me to think of the glory which has burst upon her vision, and that her eye has seen the Savior, and Paul, and all the saints of the Bible.* “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”

“Precious, precious to Jehovah is His children’s holy sleep;
He is with them in the passing through the waters cold
and deep;
Everlasting love enfolds them, softly, sweetly to His breast,
Everlasting love receives them to His glory and His rest.”

Truly, the dead who die in the Lord are thrice blessed.

Nevertheless, we miss her. At every turn I stand face to face with her blessed memory. Hardly anything in my work which her deft hand has not touched, which her sweet life has not made sacred, with which she was not in some way asso-

* *Rev. 7 : 9, 10, 15-17 ; 21 : 4, 7 ; 22 : 1-5*,—and a multitude of like passages, which tell the glory they have gained whom God has called home.

ciated. The very sunlight, in which she loved to sit, is brighter to me because she loved it. As one of the sisters wrote,—“I can scarcely go into the sitting-room when the sun is shining, without thinking of dear Isabel, for she did love the sunlight ; and that room is very sunny. Her life to others was a life of sunshine.” The moon, the stars, the woods, the flowers, the birds, have a new charm now, for she delighted in them all. I could go scarcely anywhere without some sweet remembrance of those blessed years, during which I knew and had her, being brought vividly to my mind, to tell me of my irreparable loss.

“ Oh ! the lost, the unforgotten !
In our hearts they perish not.”

When I think of her as having entered into that deathless life, and as walking over those pavements of pure transparent gold, within those walls and gates of precious stones, I cannot feel like drawing *black* lines around her death, but bands of *gold* and of *glory*. For,—just think of it !—she is clothed in *white raiment*, and has palms in her hands, and wears jewels with which her Savior has adorned her, and He has taken her by the hand, and introduced her to the King of heaven, saying,—She also is one of mine. *Rev.* 3 : 4, 5 ; 7 : 9, 10 ; *Isa.* 61 : 10. Those who knew her in life know how she delighted in clean white garments, and

that this delight was a fit emblem of the purity of her sweet life. When we think of her as sitting with Christ in the kingdom of God, and on His throne (*Luke* 13 : 29 ; *Rev.* 3 : 21), and as having on a wedding robe, and sitting at the marriage-supper of the Lamb (*Rev.* 19 : 8, 9), how can we mourn for her ! Some one spoke rightly who said that her funeral did not seem like an occasion of mourning, but of solemn and holy joy.

But when we think of our loss, the heart bleeds, and bleeds, and bleeds. Sometimes, when I look up, the eye is dim with weeping, and yonder seems so far away ; and when I try to tell the bitter sorrow in that ear which is always open, the voice is husky with grief, and it seems as if no one were near to hear. And I utter the complaint of my heart in the words of the poet she loved so well :

“ Break, break, break,

On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !

And I would that my tongue could utter

The thoughts that arise in me.

* * * * *

“ And the stately ships go on

To their haven under the hill ;

But O for the touch of a vanished hand,

And the sound of a voice that is still.”

And then better, more consoling thoughts come to me, and yonder seems nearer, and the open ear to listen, and I feel that I am not alone, and that the

hand is not vanished, nor the voice still. For there is no divine philosophy, of which I know, to forbid the conjecture that she may not be so wholly ignorant of our earthly life as we may think. But, at any rate, the voice is not still, for she being dead yet speaks, and the hand is not vanished, for her works do follow her. Oh! blest philosophy of Divine thought and compassion, which lets the touch of the blessed lives, which have been linked to ours, linger!

My task is done. More than words can tell, it has been a labor of love. I am painfully sensible of the feebleness of words to paint her life as it deserved to be painted. Their brightest colors are dim beside the truth. I must therefore leave it to the reader to say how much, if any, in his estimate, this life was above the commonplace. To those who knew her, no words of praise will be fulsome. We feel that she has entered into joys no pen can describe. We believe that her life was in every way noble, and worthy of imitation. As we have said, we can wish nothing better for the coming women than that they may be such dutiful daughters, and affectionate companions, and sincere Christians, as she was.

A mother, closing the eyes of her little daughter, who had just breathed her last, said,—“I give thee joy, my daughter.” God has given joy to our dear one, and shall we not have grace to say,—

“ We give thee joy, sweet sister ”? How shall we say it? With what words shall we end our praise of her, and say adieu? Let the following beautiful poem, from the pen of Mrs. Herrick Johnson, of Auburn, N. Y., speak for us :

“ What shall I say to thee, sweetest, kneeling beside thee in tears,—

Knowing that here ends the measure of all thy beautiful years?

Feeling the death-seal of silence between us, henceforth from this day,

Which, of all lovingest things that my heart for thee holds, shall I say?

“ Can I beg thee for dear words of parting, with eager and passionate breath?

Or lament thy so instant transition from life to this marble of death?

And if I named all thou art leaving, should it be indeed matter of grief,

That thou leavest the sowing for reaping—the seed for the full-ripened sheaf?

“ But what hast thou left, then, dear sleeper, of all that the soul counteth worth,—

Opening thine eyes upon heaven, as they close on the gladness of earth?

Thou art gone from this flower-crowned brightness to God’s glowing garden above ;

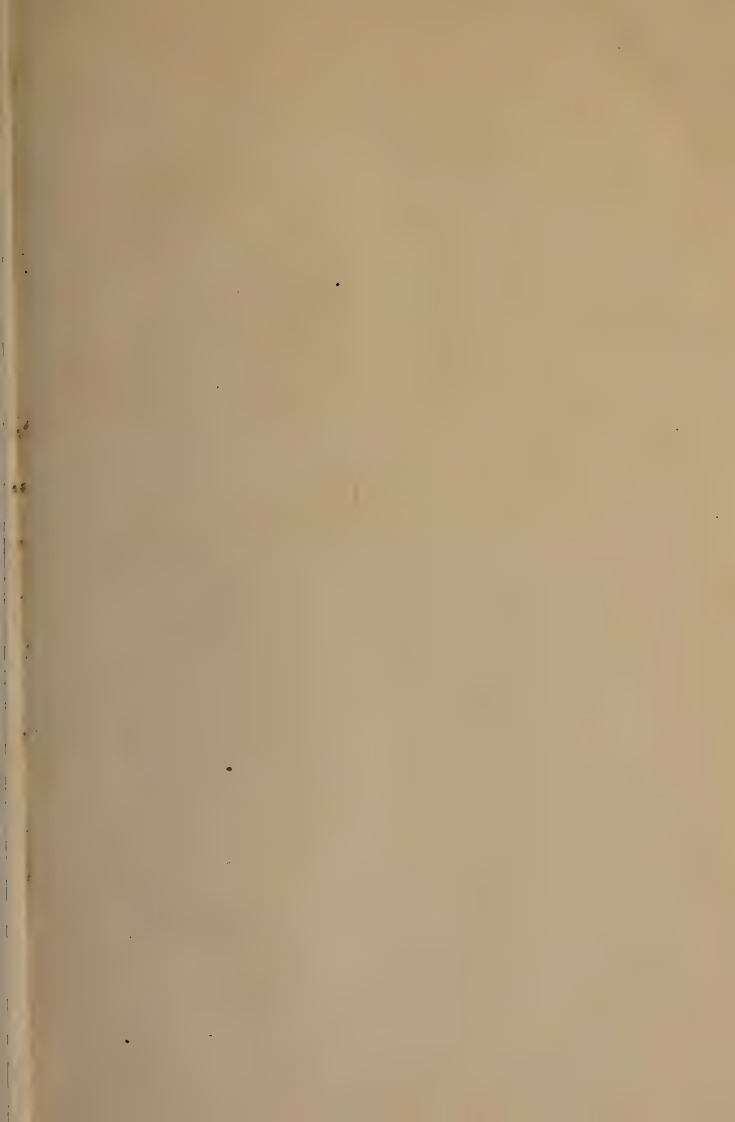
Gone from our poor, anxious loving, to infinite riches of love.

“ No shadow of death on thy pathway, no river in struggle
to cross ;
No anguish or trial of parting, no moment to picture a
loss ;
But in one happy instant, the angel who carries the golden
key,
Hath unlocked the wonderful portals, and opened all
heaven to thee !

“ O mystic, unspeakable glory ! I linger and listen outside,
Though I catch but in echo the faintest, the joy of the on-
swelling tide ;
But I know thou art there with the harpers, on the banks
of the crystal sea,
And knowing such things, beloved, I can say but one
thing to thee.

“ See, I place in thy hand these lilies, like those that the
angel brought
For the day of annunciation, and I have but this one glad
thought ;
Pressing my kisses down on thy death-sweet face, I say,
From my heart of hearts, my darling, *I give thee joy* this
day ! ”

Amen.



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